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A LAW-GOSPEL COMPARISON OF THE WORLD COUNCIL OF CHURCHES' DOCUMENT  
BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY AND THE BOOK OF CONCORD

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A Thesis Presented to the Faculty  
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,  
Department of Systematic Theology  
in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree of  
Master of Sacred Theology

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by

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. . . . .		iv
Chapter		
I.     LAW AND GOSPEL. . . . .		1
Law . . . . .		1
Gospel. . . . .		2
The Proper Distinction between Law and Gospel. . . . .		4
II. <u>BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY'S</u> CONFESION . . . . .		13
Law . . . . .		13
Gospel. . . . .		13
III. <u>THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S</u> CONFESION OF BAPTISM . . . . .		27
Law . . . . .		27
Gospel. . . . .		32
IV. <u>BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY'S</u> CONFESION OF THE EUCHARIST. . . . .		42
Law . . . . .		42
Gospel. . . . .		46
V. <u>THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S</u> CONFESION OF THE EUCHARIST . . . . .		59
Law . . . . .		59
Gospel. . . . .		63
VI. <u>BAPTISM, EUCHARIST, AND MINISTRY'S</u> CONFESION OF MINISTRY. . . . .		77
Law . . . . .		77
Gospel. . . . .		78
VII. <u>THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S</u> CONFESION OF MINISTRY. . . . .		94
Law . . . . .		94
Gospel. . . . .		98

CONCLUSION. . . . .	117
BIBLIOGRAPHY. . . . .	120

## INTRODUCTION

A document which has received a great deal of study and discussion in the past six years is Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM) published by the World Council of Churches.<sup>1</sup> This document does not claim to be a complete doctrinal treatment of "Baptism," "Eucharist" and "Ministry." Instead, "the agreed text purposely concentrates on those aspects of the theme that have been directly and indirectly related to the problems of mutual recognition leading to unity."<sup>2</sup> BEM is arranged in paragraph form and includes additional "Commentary" sections. "The main text demonstrates the major areas of theological convergence; the added commentaries either indicate historical differences that have been overcome or identify disputed issues still in need of further research and reconciliation."<sup>3</sup>

The World Council of Churches has asked all church bodies to evaluate BEM based upon four criteria:

1. The extent to which your church can recognize in this text the faith of the Church through the ages;
2. The consequences your church can draw from this text for its relations and dialogues with other churches, particularly with those churches which also recognize the text as an expression of the apostolic faith;

3. The guidance your church can take from this text for its worship, education, ethical, and spiritual life and witness;

4. The suggestions your church can make for the ongoing work of Faith and Order as it relates the material of this text on Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry to its long-range research project "Towards the Common Expression of the Apostolic Faith Today."<sup>4</sup>

The following will be an evaluation of BEM from the perspective of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. The Book of Concord will serve as the basis of comparison and evaluation for BEM's accuracy in confessing Law and Gospel in a Scriptural way. The Book of Concord confesses "that the distinction between the Law and Gospel is to be maintained in the Church with great diligence as an especially brilliant light, by which, according to the admonition of St. Paul, the Word of God is rightly divided."<sup>5</sup> Areas of close scrutiny will be whether or not BEM confesses the total sinfulness and condemnation of natural man (Law) and salvation as a totally free gift of God (Gospel); whether or not Baptism and the Eucharist are seen in any way as works by man (Law), or as complete gifts from God (Gospel); and whether or not that which is confessed in Scripture as "gift" (Gospel) is confessed in BEM as "gift" (Gospel) or as something that man achieves (sacrificial-Law).

The first section of this paper will define exactly what is meant by the terms Law and Gospel, as well as what is meant by their proper distinction. The body of this

paper will contain only the documentary material in the form of quotations from BEM and The Book of Concord. Comparisons and contrasts between BEM and The Book of Concord will be noted in the body of the paper. Observations and insights from secondary sources will be presented in extensive endnotes. An evaluation will be provided in the conclusion. Through this evaluation, BEM will be found to fail as a confession of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry that properly distinguishes Law and Gospel.

ENDNOTES

INTRODUCTION

1. Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982).
2. Ibid., p. ix.
3. Ibid.
4. Ibid., p. x.
5. Epitome of the Formula of Concord, art. V, par. 2, Concordia Triglotta, Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 51.



CHAPTER I  
LAW AND GOSPEL

Before comparing Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM) and The Book of Concord with respect to their confession of the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, it will be helpful to establish and define what is meant by the terms Law and Gospel, as well as their proper distinction. While an investigation of all aspects of Law and Gospel would consume an entire thesis in itself, only those aspects of Law and Gospel which will be helpful in the investigation of BEM and The Book of Concord will be explored (those dealing with how man is justified before God). The material presented in this section to define what is meant by Law and Gospel will be referenced repeatedly in this thesis.

Pastors in The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod answer the following two questions in the affirmative at their ordination: "Dost Thou Accept the three Ecumenical Creeds--the Apostles', the Nicene, and the Athanasian--as faithful testimonies to the truth of the Holy Scriptures and dost thou reject all the errors which they condemn?"<sup>1</sup>, and, "Dost

Thou Believe that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is a true exposition of the Word of God and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the two Catechisms of Martin Luther, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord--as contained in The Book of Concord --are also in agreement with this one Scriptural faith?"<sup>2</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord will serve as the source for defining what is meant by Law and Gospel, and their proper distinction, in this thesis.

### Law

In dealing with man's justification, The Book of Concord defines the Law as "properly a divine doctrine, in which the righteous, immutable will of God is revealed, what is to be the quality of man in his nature, thoughts, words, and works, in order that he may be pleasing to God; and it threatens its transgressors with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishments. For as Luther writes against the law-stormers (Antinomians): "Everything that reproves sin is and belongs to the Law, whose peculiar office it is to reprove sin and to lead to the knowledge of sins, Rom. 3:20; 7:7."<sup>3</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord confesses that the Law leads man to a knowledge of his sin.

Yet, once the Law does its job of "reproving sin," it also reveals to man his standing with God as a result of



his sin. The Book of Concord confesses ". . . However, now that man has not kept the Law of God, but transgressed it, his corrupt nature, thoughts, words, and works fighting against it, for which reason, he is under God's wrath, death, all temporal calamities, and the punishment of hell-fire. . . ." <sup>4</sup> Thus, the Law also reveals to man that he is under God's wrath.

The Book of Concord continues the confessions that the Law of God informs man that he is under God's wrath, and adds that the Law terrifies his conscience, and convinces him that he cannot merit forgiveness on his own when it states: "Paul says, Rom. 4:15: 'The Law worketh wrath'. He does not say that by the Law men merit the remission of sins. For the Law always accuses and terrifies consciences. Therefore it does not justify, because conscience terrified by the Law flees from the judgment of God. Therefore, they err who trust that by the Law, by their own works, they merit the remission of sins."<sup>5</sup> In a similar manner, The Book of Concord confesses that "men by their own strength cannot fulfill the Law of God, and all are under sin, and subject to eternal wrath and death, on this account we cannot be freed by the Law from sin and be justified. . . ." <sup>6</sup> Thus, the Law convicts man of His sin and offers no hope to him in attempting to avert God's wrath on his own.

Gospel

In complete contrast to the Law is the Gospel. The Book of Concord confesses that:

The Gospel is properly a doctrine which teaches what man should believe, that he may obtain forgiveness of sins with God, namely, that the Son of God, our Lord Christ, has taken upon Himself and borne the curse of the Law, has expiated and paid for all our sins, through whom alone we again enter into favor with God, obtain forgiveness of sins by faith, are delivered from death and all the punishments of sins, and eternally saved. For everything that comforts, that offers the favor and grace of God to transgressors of the Law is, and is properly called, the Gospel, a good and joyful message that God will not punish sins, but forgive them for Christ's sake.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, while the Law was shown to reveal what man should do (see above), the Gospel reveals what man should believe, namely that Christ has "expiated and paid for all his sins." In a similar definition of the Gospel that also stresses it as something man is to believe, The Book of Concord confesses that "The Gospel is properly such a doctrine as teaches what man who has not observed the Law, and therefore is condemned by it, is to believe, namely that Christ has expiated and made satisfaction for all sins, and has obtained and acquired for him, without any merit of his (no merit of the sinner intervening), forgiveness of sins, righteousness that avails before God, and eternal life."<sup>8</sup> While the Law stresses what man should do, the Gospel stresses what has been done for him and is now offered to him, without any merit on man's part.

The Book of Concord continues to draw the contrast between the Law and Gospel by saying:

All Scripture ought to be distributed into these two principal topics, the Law and the promises. For in some places it presents the Law, and in others the promises concerning Christ, namely, either when (in the Old Testament) it promises that Christ will come, and offers, for His sake, the remission of sins, justification, and life eternal, or when, in the Gospel (in the New Testament), Christ Himself, since He has appeared, promises the remission of sins, justification, and life eternal.<sup>9</sup>

Thus, "the Gospel is properly the promise of the forgiveness of sins and of justification through Christ, but. . . the Law is a doctrine which reproves sins and condemns."<sup>10</sup>

#### The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel

The Book of Concord warns that the Law and the Gospel should not be mixed and confused with one another, but that a proper distinction should be maintained between the two. The Book of Concord states:

Now, in order that both doctrines, that of the Law and that of the Gospel, be not mingled and confounded with one another, and what belongs to the one may not be ascribed to the other, whereby the merit and benefits of Christ are easily obscured and the Gospel is again turned into a doctrine of the Law. . . and thus Christians are deprived of the true comfort which they have in the Gospel against the terrors of the Law. . . therefore the true and proper distinction between Law and Gospel must with all diligence be inculcated and preserved, and whatever gives occasion for confusion 'inter legem et evangelium' (between the Law and the Gospel), that is, whereby the two doctrines, Law and Gospel, may be confounded and mingled into one doctrine, should be diligently prevented.<sup>11</sup>



Thus any attempt to ascribe to the Gospel that which belongs to the Law fails to keep the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. The Book of Concord warns that man's comfort from the terrors of the Law is removed when Law and Gospel are not properly distinguished.

In helping to keep the proper distinction between Law and Gospel, The Book of Concord confesses that these promises concerning Christ (Gospel) can be obtained only by faith. They cannot be obtained through any working of man. The Book of Concord states:

But since justification is obtained through the free promise, it follows that we cannot justify ourselves. Otherwise, wherefore would there be need to promise (And why should Paul so highly extol and praise grace?). For since the promise cannot be received except by faith, the Gospel, which is properly the promise of the remission of sins and of justification for Christ's sake, proclaims the righteousness of faith in Christ, which the Law does not teach. Nor is this righteousness of the Law. For the Law requires of us our works and our perfection. But the Gospel freely offers, for Christ's sake, to us, who have been vanquished by sin and death, reconciliation, which is received, not by works, but by faith alone. This faith brings to God, not confidence in one's own merits, but only confidence in the promise, or the mercy promised in Christ. This special faith, therefore, by which an individual believes that for Christ's sake God is reconciled and propitious, obtains remission of sins and justifies us.

Thus, the Gospel (which is properly the promise of the remission of sins and justification for Christ's sake) offers reconciliation while the Law requires of man his own perfection. One might say that the "language of the Gospel"

is "gift language" while the "language of the Law" is "requirement language" (see above).

This difference in language between the Law and the Gospel produces what might be called a "difference in direction" between the Law and the Gospel. The Law is seen as requiring of man (man-to-God) while the Gospel is confessed as offering (God-to-man) the blessings of God. The Book of Concord states, "For the Law requires of us our works and our perfection. But the Gospel freely offers, for Christ's sake, to us, who have been vanquished by sin and death, reconciliation, which is received, not by works, but by faith alone."<sup>13</sup>

This "difference in direction" is further confessed in The Book of Concord confession that the proper work of faith is not to present to God, but rather to avail itself of the blessings of the Gospel that are offered. The Book of Concord states that, "Thus, because faith, which freely receives the remission of sins, sets Christ, the Mediator and Propitiator, against God's wrath, it does not present our merits or our love (which would be tossed aside like a little feather in a hurricane). This faith is the true knowledge of Christ and avails itself of the benefits of Christ, and regenerates hearts, and precedes the fulfilling of the Law."<sup>14</sup>

The Book of Concord continues to confess this "difference in direction" in dealing with faith and the

blessings of God when it states, "Faith is that my whole heart takes to itself this treasure. It is not my doing, not my presenting or giving, and my work or preparation, but that a heart comforts itself, and is perfectly confident with respect to this, namely, that God makes a present and gift to us, and not we to Him, that He sheds upon us every treasure of grace in Christ."<sup>15</sup> Thus, the way of the Gospel is the way of God giving His gifts and the way of faith is the way of receiving (taking hold of) those gifts. Giving gifts to God in order to receive blessings from Him is not the way of the Gospel.

What's more, the way of giving gifts to God in an attempt to receive blessings from Him is not only contrary to the Gospel, but it is of the Law! The Book of Concord confesses: "And the difference between this faith and the righteousness of the Law can be easily discerned. Faith is the λατρεία (divine service), which receives the benefits offered by God; the righteousness of the Law is the λατρεία (divine service) which offers to God our merits. By faith, God wishes to be worshipped in this way, that we receive from Him those things which He promises and offers."<sup>16</sup> Thus, "religions of the Law," which seek to offer to God the merits of man are displeasing to God and are not the way God wishes to be worshipped!

The Book of Concord also warns against those who do not rightly distinguish Law and Gospel when they do not



recognize Christ as the One Mediator between man and God. Instead, they believe that Christ has only purchased for them the opportunity to be their own mediator and to come to God by their own merit. The Book of Concord states:

Thus, therefore, we are reconciled to the Father, and receive remission of sins, when we are comforted with confidence in the mercy promised for Christ's sake. The adversaries regard Christ as Mediator and Propitiator for this reason, namely, that He has merited the habit of love; they do not urge us to use Him now as Mediator, but as though Christ were altogether buried, they imagine that we have access through our own works, and, through these, merit the habit, and afterwards, by this love, come to God. Is not this to bury Christ altogether, and to take away the entire doctrine of faith? Paul, on the contrary, teaches that we have access, i.e., reconciliation, through Christ. And to show how this occurs, he adds that we have access by faith. "By faith, therefore, for Christ's sake, we receive remission of sins. We cannot set our own love and our own works against God's wrath."<sup>17</sup>

Thus, any attempt to view Christ as anything other than the One Mediator, by Whom man has access to the Father, is to eliminate the Gospel and faith. Any attempt by man to be his own Mediator and approach God in any way other than through Christ alone, is nothing more than to "bury Christ altogether."

The Book of Concord also confesses that anything less than a full and total giving of the gifts of the Gospel is also contrary to the Gospel. In other words, a "partim-partim" effect when it comes to the gifts of the Gospel is contrary to the Gospel. In discussing those who thought that God bestowed upon man a "habit of love" which allows

them to approach God on their own and only gives one partial merit to begin with, The Book of Concord states:

Their feigning distinction between meritum congrui and meritum condigni (due merit and true, complete merit) is only an artifice in order not to appear openly to Pelagianize. For, if God necessarily gives grace for the meritum congrui (due merit), it is no longer meritum congrui, but meritum condigni (a true duty and complete merit). But they do not know what they are saying. After this habit of love (is there), they imagine that man can acquire merit de condigno. And yet they bid us doubt whether there be a habit present.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, to say that God only gives a part of His gifts and leaves man to earn the rest, is contrary to the Gospel (see above).

With Law and Gospel defined and their proper distinction explained, as they relate to man's justification, the comparison and evaluation of BEM with The Book of Concord on the basis of Law and Gospel can now take place.



## ENDNOTES

### LAW AND GOSPEL

1. The Lutheran Agenda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1961), p. 106.
2. Ibid., pp. 106-107.
3. Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord, art. V, par. 17, in Concordia Triglotta, Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (Saint Louis, Mo., 1921), p. 957.
4. Ibid., art. V, par. 20, pp. 957-959.
5. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, art. IV, par. 38-39, in Concordia Triglotta, p. 131.
6. Ibid., art. IV, par. 40, p. 131.
7. Thorough Declaration, art. V, par. 20-21, Concordia Triglotta, pp. 957-959.
8. Epitome of the Formula of Concord, art. V, par. 5, Concordia Triglotta, p. 961.
9. Apology, art. IV, par. 5, Concordia Triglotta, p. 121.
10. Thorough Declaration, art. V, par. 27, Concordia Triglotta, p. 961.
11. Ibid.
12. Apology, art. IV, par. 43-44, Concordia Triglotta, p. 133.
13. Ibid., art. IV, par. 44, p. 133.
14. Ibid., art. IV, par. 46, p. 133.
15. Ibid., art. IV, par. 49, p. 135.

16. Ibid., art. IV, par. 50, p. 135.
17. Ibid., art. IV, par. 81, pp. 143-145.
18. Ibid., art. IV, par. 19-20, p. 125.

## CHAPTER II

### BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY'S CONFESSION OF BAPTISM

#### Law

In its Baptism section, Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) does not discuss the topics of "original sin," "sin," "punishment for sin," "wrath of God," and "condemnation." Thus, BEM does not discuss the condemnation of the non-baptized unbeliever (Law). The closest that BEM comes to a Law statement regarding the non-baptized is the statement, "The infant is born into a broken world and shares in its brokenness."<sup>1</sup> The word sin is not used in this section. The word brokenness is the only word used to refer to the condition into which man is born. The word brokenness will be found to be not as precise and graphic as the statement of man's original condition in The Book of Concord (see pp. 27-29).

#### Gospel

BEM's confession of the Gospel in Baptism demonstrates what might be described as a "partim-partim" effect. There is the sense in which Baptism is said to deliver gifts to the baptized person, but there is also the sense in which there is still more to be delivered

(fulfilled) at a later date. For example, in discussing the relationship of Baptism and the Holy Spirit, BEM states:

God bestows upon all baptized persons the anointing and the promise of the Holy Spirit, marks them with a seal and implants in their hearts the first installment of their inheritance as sons and daughters of God. The Holy Spirit nurtures the life of faith in their hearts until the final deliverance when they will enter into its full possession, to the praise and glory of God.<sup>2</sup>

Referring to Baptism as delivering the "first installment" would seem to indicate that Baptism falls short of delivering all the gifts that God intends for His people, but only a portion of the Gospel. This has been shown to be contrary to the way of the Gospel (see pp. 9-10).

BEM continues this "partim-partim" effect in discussing the "full fruit" of Baptism. BEM states, "The personal faith of the recipient of baptism and faithful participation in the life of the Church are essential for the full fruit of baptism."<sup>3</sup> Once again, there seems to be fractioning of the benefits of Baptism--a "some now" and "the rest later" proposition. One could also ask whether God or the "Christian community" is the bestower of the "full fruit" of Baptism after reading BEM's account. This working on the part of man (the Christian Community) to help deliver the gifts of Baptism has been shown to be contrary to the Gospel (see pp. 7-8).

BEM refuses to make a determination concerning the connection of the Spirit to Baptism. This allowance for a separation between Baptism and the giving of the Spirit



further this "partim-partim" effect. BEM states, "Different actions have become associated with the giving of the Spirit. For some it is the water rite itself. For others, it is the anointing with chrism and/or the imposition of hands, which many churches call confirmation. For still others it is all three, as they see the Spirit operative throughout the rite. All agree that Christian baptism is in water and the Holy Spirit."<sup>4</sup> BEM makes no definitive statement with regard to the Spirit being given in Baptism, but is content to allow the "partim-partim effect" of Baptism to exist with respect to the giving of the Spirit. Any confession that upholds a "partial giving" or calls into doubt whether the gifts are given in Baptism, has been shown to rob man of the comfort of the Gospel (see pp. 5-6).

BEM also uses legalistic terms in connection with Baptism that tend to make a Law, rather than Gospel, confession regarding Baptism. For example, BEM lists several "requirements" for the baptized, following Baptism, in order for Baptism to have its full effect. In discussing the Baptism of infants and adults, BEM states, "In both cases, the baptized person will have to grow in the understanding of faith. For those baptized upon their own confession of faith, there is always the constant requirement of a continual growth of personal response in faith. In the case of infants, personal confession is

expected later, and Christian nurture is directed to the eliciting of this confession."<sup>5</sup> The use of the terms requirement and have to concerning the growth in the life of sanctification following Baptism implies a legal mandate (Law) connected with Baptism, rather than a totally gift-centered (Gospel) confession of Baptism. "Requirement language" has been shown to be contrary to the Gospel (see pp. 6-7).

BEM also gives man some of the credit for that which is accomplished in Baptism. In discussing the significance of Baptism, BEM states, "Baptism is both God's gift and our human response to that gift. It looks towards a growth into the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:13). The necessity of faith for the reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism is acknowledged by all churches."<sup>6</sup> This description of Baptism as "both God's gift and our human response to that gift" is a denial of Baptism as God's complete gift (Gospel) and seems to place some of the credit for Baptism's benefits with man's efforts (Law). Once again, this working on the part of man in an effort to achieve the blessings of God was shown to be contrary to the Gospel (see pp. 7-8). This "difference in direction" between the way of the Law and the way of the Gospel is not kept distinct in BEM (see p. 7). Thus, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is not always kept.

Baptism is also referred to as a "rite of commitment" and an "initiation practice" in BEM. BEM states, "It (baptism) is incorporation into Christ, who is the crucified and risen Lord; it is entry into the New Covenant between God and God's people. . . . The churches today continue this practice as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows his grace upon His people."<sup>7</sup> By referring to Baptism as a "rite of commitment," it sounds as if man is the one doing the work in Baptism (Law). Again, BEM states, "Both forms of baptism require a similar and responsible attitude towards Christian nurture. A rediscovery of the continuing character of Christian nurture may facilitate the mutual acceptance of different initiation practices."<sup>8</sup> This reference to Baptism as an "initiation practice" equates Baptism with other human acts of initiation that are performed by man in the secular realm or in a natural religion. Here, man, not God, is emphasized as the active agent. All of these statements which highlight the work of man lead one to a "religion of the Law" not of the Gospel (see pp. 7-8).

BEM does not make a very convincing confession of the forgiveness of sin being delivered in Baptism. BEM states:

Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ. It unites the one baptized with Christ and with His people. The New Testament scriptures and the liturgy of the Church unfold the meaning of baptism in various images which express the riches of Christ and the gifts of his salvation. These images are sometimes linked



with the symbolic uses of water in the Old Testament. Baptism is participation in Christ's death and resurrection (Rom. 6:3-5; Col. 2:12); a washing away of sin (I Cor. 6:11); a new birth (John 3:5); an enlightenment by Christ (Eph. 5:14); a reclothing in Christ (Gal. 3:27); a renewal by the Spirit (Titus 3:5); the experience of salvation from the flood (I Peter 3:20-21); an exodus from bondage (I Cor. 10:1-2) and a liberation into a new humanity in which barriers of division, whether of sex or race or social status are transcended (Gal. 3:27-28; I Cor. 12:13). The images are many but the reality is one.<sup>9</sup>

It is not clear from this section whether the forgiveness of sin is delivered in Baptism, or whether it is just one of the many "images" of Baptism contained in Scripture.

In further use of symbolic language, BEM states, "Administered in obedience to our Lord, baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship. Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. Our common baptism, which unites us to Christ in faith, is thus a basic bond of unity."<sup>10</sup> Once again, does Baptism deliver that which truly unites all Christians--faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of all sin--or is it just a sign of that unity? BEM does not seem to clarify this issue.

In discussing the meaning of Baptism, BEM continues this symbolic language. BEM indicates that "It is appropriate to explain in the context of the Baptismal service the meaning of Baptism as it appears from scriptures (i.e. the participation in Christ's death and resurrection, conversion, pardoning and cleansing, gift of the Spirit,



incorporation into the body of Christ and sign of the Kingdom."<sup>11</sup> Whether one is really in the Kingdom through Baptism, or whether Baptism just signifies one's belonging in the Kingdom is not clear in BEM.

In a similar statement, BEM confesses, "In God's work of salvation, the paschal mystery of Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the pentecostal gift of the Holy Spirit. Similarly, participation in Christ's death and resurrection is inseparably linked with the receiving of the Spirit. Baptism in its full meaning signifies and effects both."<sup>12</sup> Once again, one could question the use of the terms signifies, effects, and participates in with regard to the gifts of Baptism. These terms can lead to the conclusion that the gifts of Baptism are not delivered in reality, but only in a figurative or symbolic way. Once again, any confession that leaves doubt as to whether or not the gifts of God are actually delivered in Baptism, has been shown to be the result of the failure to maintain the proper distinction between Law and Gospel (see pp. 9-10).

BEM also makes a distinction between "infant baptism" and "believer's baptism." BEM states, "In some churches which unite both infant-baptism and believer-baptism traditions, it has been possible to regard as equivalent alternatives for entry into the Church both a pattern whereby baptism in infancy is followed by later

profession of faith and a pattern whereby believer's baptism follows upon a presentation and blessing in infancy."<sup>13</sup> This differentiation between "infant baptism" and "believer's baptism" imply that "infant baptism" is not "believer's baptism." Their equating of infant baptism to a "presentation and blessing in infancy" would also confess Baptism to be something that man does, not God. It would confess Baptism as only a "partial blessing," at best. Both this "man-to-God" activity and the "partim-partim" effect in confessing the gifts of Baptism fail to properly distinguish Law and Gospel (see pp. 7-9).

BEM repeats its distinction between "infant baptism" and "believer's baptism" when it seeks to make suggestions for churches seeking a "mutual recognition" of Baptism. BEM states, "In order to overcome their differences, believer baptists and those who practice infant baptism should reconsider certain aspects of their practices."<sup>14</sup> This distinction is highlighted even further when BEM concludes, "The latter (churches who practice infant baptism) must guard themselves against the practice of apparently indiscriminate baptism and take more seriously their responsibility for the nurture of baptized children to mature commitment to Christ."<sup>15</sup> The warning against "indiscriminate baptism" and the differentiation between

"infant baptism" and "believer's baptism" indicate that BEM does not confess an infant baptism that delivers forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation (Gospel).



## ENDNOTES

### BEM'S CONFESSION OF BAPTISM

1. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), Commentary 12, p. 5. The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod (LCMS) comments, "Likewise, a serious caricature results from BEM's failure to clarify the connection between baptism and original sin. It is misleading to classify the 'washing away of sin' (I Cor. 6:11) as merely one 'image' among many of the meaning of baptism (B2)." (The LCMS Responses to the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches to the text of 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry' (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1985), p. 8). In commenting on the absence of a detailed statement in BEM regarding man's natural state of sin, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA--now merged into the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)) comments that it would like to see "A clearer expression of the dynamic of sin and grace and what this means for baptism, eucharist and ministry. A stress is needed on the sinfulness of humankind and how this condition of humanity is related to the sacraments. The concept of simul justus et peccator could strengthen the document. It is not necessary that the actual words with the concept be in the text" (Max Thurian, ed., Churches Respond to BEM, 2 vols., (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 1:34). The American Lutheran Church (ALC--now merged into the ELCA) comments, "The text does not articulate an adequate understanding of the dynamic of sin and grace and what this means for baptism, Eucharist, and ministry. The relation of the sacraments to human sinfulness is therefore not clear. For example, no connection is made between Baptism and original sin; the forgiveness of sin is absent from the themes developed in relation to the Eucharist" (Churches Respond, 2:81).

2. BEM, II, C, 5, p. 2.
3. Ibid., Commentary 12, p. 5.
4. Ibid., IV, B, 14, p. 6.
5. Ibid., IV, A, 12, p. 4.

6. Ibid., III, 8, p. 3. The LCMS comments, "Certain corollaries of the preceding statements are developed unsatisfactorily in BEM, however. The initial (B1) reference to baptism as a "rite of commitment" and a later reference to the sacrament as "both God's gift and our human response to that gift" (B8) signal a confusion between monergism of divine grace and our human response which is never clarified in the document" (LCMS Response, p. 8).

7. Ibid., I, 1, p. 2. The ALC comments, "We are concerned that the document does not sufficiently stress Baptism as God's own saving act. This central significance of Baptism is vitiated by referring to the sacrament as 'a rite of commitment' (Paragraph 1). While acknowledging the appropriateness of our response to baptism, speaking of the baptism itself as 'both God's gift and our human response to that gift' (Paragraph 8) seems to detract from the monergism of grace with regard to the sacrament" (Churches Respond, 2:81). The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCOA) also comments, "At the end of B1 we read: 'The Churches today continue this practice as a rite of commitment to the Lord who bestows His grace upon His people.' We question this statement in view of the fact that it is not stated clearly that baptism is a means of grace. Without denying that baptism involves a commitment, we believe that the primary stress ought to be on the fact that this sacrament, by its very nature, is a means of grace" (Ibid., 2:88).

8. Ibid., Commentary 12, p. 5.

9. Ibid., II, 2, p. 2.

10. Ibid., II, D, 6, p. 3.

11. Ibid., V, 21, p. 6.

12. Ibid., IV, B, 14, pp. 4-6. Max Thurian, General Editor of the responses made by churches to BEM writes in order to explain the use of symbolic language in BEM with reference to Baptism: "For the Lima document, baptism is quite evidently a sacrament; in other words an effective liturgical sign, a sign which really effects what it signifies in image or symbol. 'Since the earliest of days, baptism has been understood as the sacrament by which believers are incorporated into the body of Christ and are endowed with the Holy Spirit' (E19 Commentary). The



document does not contain any explicit definition of the sacrament, but the context clearly implies some such definition as the one just given: the sacrament is a liturgical sign which effectively produces in reality that which it signifies in image or symbol. The term 'sign' occurs a number of times in the text, as does the term 'seal,' which adds the idea that the sacrament marks the person with a spiritual imprint: Baptism is the sign of new life through Jesus Christ (B2). . . God bestows upon all baptized persons the anointing of the promised Holy Spirit, marks them with a seal and implants in their hearts the first installment of their inheritance as sons and daughters of God (B5). . . Baptism is a sign and seal of our common discipleship (B6). The sacrament consists of images and symbols which enrich the significance of the sign.

As used in the Lima document, the term 'sign' should be understood in the emphatic sense of 'effective sign.' This is equivalent to the term 'sacrament.' It does not minimize the reality which is present and at work; it is intended to affirm this reality as efficacious in God's sight, in a mysterious way and not according to the flesh as an act of magic. The document strongly affirms the spiritual reality which is the fruit of the sacrament, of the effective sign: baptism is our incorporation into Christ, our entry into the new covenant, a gift of God. 'It unites the one baptized with Christ and with his people' (B2). For the baptized person, whether adult or infant, an event takes place; this is not simply a symbolic act making explicit individual conversion, the divine pardon and inner cleansing owed to the faith of the believer. As we shall see, there is indeed a close connection between faith and baptism; but it is not primarily a question of the believer signifying his faith by baptism but rather that baptism, divine action, effects the participation of the baptized person in Christ's death and resurrection, converts, pardons and cleanses, gives the Spirit, incorporates into the body of Christ, anticipates the life of the kingdom of God in the personal life of each believer. We have just recalled the five main meanings of baptism indicated in the Lima document which correspond to five aspects of the spiritual reality conveyed by the sacrament of baptism are: 'fully identified with the death of Christ. . . are buried with him and are raised here and now to a new life. . . those baptized are pardoned, cleansed and sanctified by Christ. . . God bestows on all baptized persons the anointing of the promised Holy Spirit. . .



Through baptism, Christians are brought into union with Christ, with each other and with the Church of every time and place. . . . Baptism. . . . is a sign of the Kingdom of God and of the life of the world to come. . . . (B3-7).' What the sacrament of baptism proclaims, therefore, is the initiative of God in the gift of the new life; this new life is not the fruit of our efforts nor even of our confession of faith but of the Holy Spirit who converts the heart. Baptism emphasizes the prevenience of the grace bestowed over the faith confessed; it affirms the justification by faith which precedes the obedience of works" (Churches Respond, 1:10-11).

13. Ibid., Commentary 12, p. 5. In commenting on BEM's distinction between "infant baptism" and "believer's baptism," the LCMS states: "Closely related to the foregoing point is the document's attempt to countenance both infant baptism and believer's baptism. The claim that 'the real distinction is between those who baptize people at any age and those who baptize only those able to make a confession of faith for themselves' does not adequately recognize that the most important difference is between those who understand baptism itself as sheer gift and actual means of grace (sacrament) and those who make conversion and confession of faith a prerequisite to the symbolization of that gift" (LCMS Response, p. 8). In like manner, the ALC responds, "A similar concern must be noted with regard to the general treatment of infant Baptism and believer's Baptism. To state that 'the real distinction is between those who baptize people at any age and those who baptize only those able to make a confession of faith for themselves' (Paragraph 12, Commentary) is altogether too simple and even misleading. The real distinction is between those who emphasize Baptism as a sheer gift of God, and those who emphasize the response of confession and conversion. The central issue is whether Baptism will be understood solely as God's saving activity, or whether it will be understood in terms of human response to God's saving action. To give equal approbation to both forms of Baptism (as in Paragraph 12, Commentary) results in theological confusion concerning the very nature of the sacrament" (Churches Respond, 2:81-82). In voicing the same concern, the LCOA comments, "B12 begins with the words: 'Both the baptism of believers and the baptism of infants take place in the Church as the community of faith.' We do not believe a distinction should be made between believers

baptism and infants baptism. There is only one baptism  
(Eph. 4:5, Nicene Creed)" (Ibid., 2:89).

14. Ibid., C, 16, p. 6.

15. Ibid.



## CHAPTER III

### THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S CONFESSION OF BAPTISM

#### Law

In contrast to Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM), The Book of Concord contains many references to "original sin" and man's utter "lostness" (Law). The Augsburg Confession, in explaining what the Lutheran Churches were teaching, states, "Also they teach that since the fall of Adam, all men begotten in the natural way are born with sin (in Sünden empfangen und geboren werden), that is, without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with concupiscence; and that this disease, or vice of origin, is truly sin, even now condemning and bringing eternal death upon those not born again through Baptism and the Holy Ghost."<sup>1</sup>

The Book of Concord also renounces any attempt to soften the effects of man's sinful nature. In listing what it rejects as false doctrine, The Book of Concord states:

4. Also, that original sin is only a slight, insignificant spot on the outside, dashed upon the nature, or a blemish that has been blown upon it, beneath which (nevertheless) the nature has retained its good powers even in spiritual things.

5. Also, that original sin is only an external impediment to the good spiritual powers, and not a despoliation (eine Beraubung) or want of the same, as

when a magnet is smeared with garlic-juice, its natural power is not thereby removed, but only impeded; or that this stain can be easily wiped away like a spot from the face or pigment of a wall.

6. Also, that in man the human nature and essence are not entirely corrupt, but that man still has something good in him, even in spiritual things, namely, capacity, skill, aptness, or ability in spiritual things to begin, to work, or to help working for something good.<sup>2</sup>

This confession of man's natural, Spiritual worthlessness from his conception, is a contrast to the absence of any detailed statement in BEM regarding man's Spiritual state prior to Baptism. In confessing man's sinful state, The Book of Concord is making a confession of Law (see p. 3).

The total lostness of man is also described as his being a member of Satan's kingdom in The Book of Concord. Man is described as being "subject to death and the devil."<sup>3</sup> Those without faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior are described as those who are "ruled by the devil, and are captives of the devil. . ."<sup>4</sup> Thus, man, by his very nature, is confessed to belong to the kingdom of Satan in The Book of Concord. This type of condemnatory confession is missing from BEM (see p. 13).

In addition to stating what it rejects as false when considering the utter lostness of man, The Book of Concord also states in a positive way the Lutheran teaching of original sin. The Book of Concord states:

3. But, on the other hand, we believe, teach and confess that original sin is not a slight, but so deep a corruption of human nature that nothing healthy or

incorrupt has remained in man's body or soul, in his inner or outward powers, but, as the Church sings: 'Through Adam's fall is all corrupt, nature and essence human.' This damage is unspeakable, and cannot be discerned by reason, but only from God's Word. And (we affirm) that no one but God alone can separate from one another the nature and this corruption of the nature, which will fully come to pass through death, in the (blessed) resurrection. . . .<sup>5</sup>

This emphasis on the total corruption of man's body and soul, apart from Baptism (Law), is absent from BEM, but prominent in The Book of Concord.

The Book of Concord also makes a very clear statement with regard to the penalty for this original sin. It states, "The punishment and penalty of original sin, which God imposed upon the children of Adam and upon original sin, are death, eternal damnation, and also other bodily and spiritual, temporal and eternal miseries, and the tyranny and dominion of the devil, so that human nature is subject to the kingdom of the devil and has been surrendered to the power of the devil. . . ."<sup>6</sup> This punishment leads The Book of Concord to describe natural man as a "lost and condemned creature."<sup>7</sup>

The Book of Concord also confesses that natural man abides under the wrath of God as a result of his original sin. In describing the natural state of man since the sin of Adam and Eve, The Book of Concord confesses "his nature and person are nevertheless sinful, that is, thoroughly and utterly infected and corrupted before God by original sin, as by a spiritual leprosy; and on account of this corruption



and because of the fall of the first man the nature or person is accused or condemned by God's Law, so that we are by nature children of wrath, death, and damnation, unless we are delivered therefrom by the merit of Christ."<sup>8</sup>

In addition, The Book of Concord confesses the wrath of God to be upon natural man. The Book of Concord, in stating the impossibility of love to free man from the wrath of God, confesses:

Lastly, it was very foolish for the adversaries to write that men who are under eternal wrath merit the remission of sins by an act of love, which springs from their mind, since it is impossible to love God, unless the remission of sins be apprehended first by faith. For the heart, truly feeling that God is angry, cannot love God, unless He be shown to have been reconciled. As long as He terrifies us, and seems to cast us into eternal death, human nature is not able to take courage, so as to love a wrathful, judging, and punishing God. .

This terror of the conscience that is produced by the wrath of God is confessed in The Book of Concord as "the thunderbolt of God by which He strikes in a heap (hurls to the ground) both manifest sinners and false saints (hypocrites), and suffers no one to be in the right (declares no one righteous), but drives them all together to terror and despair."<sup>10</sup> A statement such as this, describing the penalty for original sin, the fate of the non-baptized, and the terror of their conscience is absent in BEM. In this way, The Book of Concord confesses the Law completely when it comes to man's sinful state. There is no mention of "terror" or "despair" as a result of man's guilt in BEM.



While BEM has no statement confessing the necessity of Baptism for salvation, The Book of Concord confesses the necessity of Baptism for salvation. The Augsburg Confession states, "Of Baptism they teach that it is necessary to salvation, and that through Baptism is offered the grace of God . . . . They condemn the Anabaptists, who reject the Baptism of children, and say that children are saved without Baptism."<sup>11</sup> This statement of the necessity of Baptism for salvation and a rejection of salvation for children outside of Baptism is absent in BEM. This is a strong statement of the utter "lostness" of man apart from Baptism (Law).

Thus, while BEM mentions only a "broken world" and a "brokenness" into which natural man is born (see p. 13), The Book of Concord is very definite in its description of natural man, apart from Baptism, as sinful, corrupt, and dead. In addition, the distinction made in BEM between "infant baptism" and "believer's baptism" (see pp. 19-20) is absent in The Book of Concord. In this way, BEM pales in comparison to The Book of Concord regarding its confession of Law in the Baptism section.

Gospel

While The Book of Concord confesses the total corruption and condemnation of man apart from Baptism, it also confesses the salvation of man as a free gift from God through Baptism (Gospel). For example, The Book of Concord describes what Baptism gives to a person: "What does Baptism give or profit? Answer: It works (Sie wirkt) forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare."<sup>12</sup> While BEM seemed to give man at least a portion of the credit for Baptism's accomplishments (see p. 16), The Book of Concord speaks of man in the passive sense and Baptism in the active sense-- "It works, delivers, and gives." The Book of Concord emphasizes God's working (Gospel) in Baptism and does not give man credit for Baptism's accomplishments (Law). This practice of receiving (taking hold of) the gifts offered by God was shown to be the way of the Gospel and the way of faith (see pp. 7-8) and helps The Book of Concord properly distinguish between Law and Gospel.

The Book of Concord also emphasizes Baptism as God's work (Gospel) when it confesses, "Thus, it appears what a great, excellent thing Baptism is, which delivers us from the jaws of the devil and makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin, and then daily strengthens the new man; and is and remains ever efficacious until we pass from this

estate of misery to eternal glory."<sup>13</sup> Once again, The Book of Concord states, "but here in Baptism there is brought free to everyone's door such a treasure and medicine as utterly destroys death and preserves all men alive."<sup>14</sup> The Book of Concord leaves no doubt that it is Baptism, not man, which "delivers, makes us God's own, suppresses and takes away sin." This is a totally gift-centered (Gospel) confession of Baptism.

This Gospel-filled confession of Baptism, which emphasizes God as the active One in Baptism, delivering the blessings of Baptism to a passive man, is further confessed in The Book of Concord: "For to be Baptized in the name of God is to be Baptized not by men, but by God Himself. Therefore, although it is performed by human hands, it is nevertheless truly God's own work. From this fact everyone may himself readily infer that it is a far higher work than any work performed by a man or a saint. For what work greater than the work of God can we do?"<sup>15</sup> While BEM used legalistic language such as requirement and have to to emphasize man's life following Baptism (see pp. 15-16), The Book of Concord speaks only of what God gives (Gospel) in Baptism. The Book of Concord makes a confession that is Gospel-centered (see pp. 5-6).

The Book of Concord further emphasizes Baptism as God's work and gift to man (Gospel) when it states, "Thus you see plainly that there is here no work done by us, but a



treasure which He gives us, and which faith apprehends; just as the Lord Jesus Christ upon the cross is not a work, but a treasure comprehended in the Word, and offered to us and received by faith. Therefore they do us violence by exclaiming against us as though we preach against faith; while we alone insist upon it as being of such a necessity that without it nothing can be received or enjoyed."<sup>16</sup> This confession of Baptism, which emphasizes the working of God in Baptism, is a contrast to BEM's confession of Baptism as "both God's gift and our human response to that gift" (see p. 16).

While BEM only talked of faith as being necessary for the "reception of the salvation embodied and set forth in baptism,"<sup>17</sup> there is no statement in BEM regarding faith being created in Baptism. The Book of Concord states, "For when we are baptized, when we eat the Lord's body, when we are absolved, our hearts must be firmly assured that God truly forgives us for Christ's sake. And God, at that same time, by the word and the rite, moves hearts to believe and conceive faith ('Et corda simul per Verbum et ritum movet Deus, ut credant et concipiant fidem'), just as Paul says, Rom. 10:17: "Faith cometh by hearing."<sup>18</sup>

While The Book of Concord does speak of faith as being created in Baptism, it is also careful to confess that faith is not a synergistic action on the part of man. It states, "For my faith does not make Baptism, but receives



it. Now, Baptism does not become invalid (unrecht) even though it be wrongly received or employed; since it is not bound (as stated) to our faith, but to the Word."<sup>19</sup>

A related contrast between BEM and The Book of Concord is BEM's lack of connection between the water and the Word in Baptism. The Book of Concord confesses the benefits of Baptism as being delivered not by the water alone, but by the water connected with the Word and promises of God. For example, The Book of Concord states:

Here you see again how highly and precious we should esteem Baptism, because in it we obtain such an unspeakable treasure, which also indicates sufficiently that it cannot be ordinary mere water. For mere water could not do such a thing, but the Word does it, and (as said above) the fact that the name of God is comprehended therein. But where the name of God is, there must be also life and salvation, that it may indeed be called a divine, blessed, fruitful, and gracious water; for by the Word such power is imparted to Baptism that it is a laver of regeneration, as St. Paul also calls it, Titus 3:5.<sup>20</sup>

The Book of Concord explains further that it is not only the Word of God connected with the water that delivers the gifts of Baptism, but the Holy Spirit, working in and through that Word to deliver Baptism's gifts. The Book of Concord states:

How can water do such great things? - Answer: It is not the water indeed that does them, but the Word of God which is in and with the water, and faith, which trusts such Word of God in the water. For without the Word of God the water is simple water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Ghost, as St. Paul says, Titus, chapter three: "By the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which He shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ, our Savior, that, being justified by His grace, we should be

made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. This is a faithful saying."<sup>21</sup>

BEM does state that, "The Holy Spirit is at work in the lives of people before, in and after baptism,"<sup>22</sup> but it does not say what the Holy Spirit is at work to accomplish. There is certainly no statement in BEM to the effect that the Holy Spirit works through the water and the Word of God to deliver the gifts of forgiveness, faith, and salvation in Baptism. Further, there is no use of the term regeneration in BEM with respect to Baptism. Instead, BEM is rather tentative in talking about the connection of the Holy Spirit to Baptism (see p. 14).

Another way that BEM's confession of Baptism contrasts with that of The Book of Concord is with regard to BEM's "partim-partim effect" in confessing the Gospel which was noted earlier (see p. 14). The Book of Concord does not exhibit this "partim-partim effect," but confesses God as delivering "the whole gift" in Baptism. For example, The Book of Concord states:

In the second place, since we know what Baptism is, and how it is to be regarded, we must also learn why and for what purpose it is instituted; that is, what it profits, gives, and works. And this also we cannot discern better than from the words of Christ above quoted: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." Therefore state it most simply thus, that the power, work, profit, fruit, and end of Baptism is this, namely, to save. For no one is baptized in order that he may become a prince, but, as the words declare, that he be saved. But to be saved, we know, is nothing else than to be delivered from sin, death, and the devil, and to enter into the kingdom of Christ, and to live with Him forever.<sup>23</sup>



This confession that to be baptized is to be saved, is a sharp contrast to the "some now" and "some later" language of BEM. The result is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel (see pp. 9-10).

As a matter of fact, The Book of Concord reacts sharply against those who were insisting that the Lutherans were teaching a "partim-partim effect" when it came to Baptism. Some had misunderstood what Luther wrote when he discussed how man still sins after Baptism. The Book of Concord clarifies the Lutheran position when it states:

Here our adversaries inveigh against Luther also because he wrote, "Original sin remains after Baptism." They add that this article was justly condemned by Leo X. But His Imperial Majesty will find on this point a manifest slander. For our adversaries know in what sense Luther intended this remark, that original sin remains after Baptism. He always wrote thus, namely, that Baptism removes the guilt of original sin, although the material, as they call it, of the sin, i.e., concupiscence, remains. He also added in reference to the material that the Holy Ghost, given through Baptism, begins to mortify the concupiscence, and creates new movements (a new light, a new sense and spirit) in man. In the same manner, Augustine also speaks, who says: "Sin is remitted in Baptism, not in such a manner that it no longer exists, but so that it is not imputed." Hee he confesses openly that sin exists, i.e., that it remains, although it is not imputed. And this judgment was so agreeable to those who succeeded him that it was recited also in the decrees.<sup>24</sup>

The Book of Concord does not speak of Baptism using BEM's description of it as a "first installment,"<sup>25</sup> nor does The Book of Concord speak of Baptism in a way that indicates that we receive some of the gift now and the rest of the gift as we live in God's community.<sup>26</sup> Instead, The Book of

Concord states that Baptism is necessary and effectual to salvation ("sed neccessarius et efficax ad salutem").<sup>27</sup> The Book of Concord confesses that Baptism "makes us God's own" ("Gott zu eigen macht;" "Deum nobis proprium faciens").<sup>28</sup> In this way, The Book of Concord does not display BEM's "partim-partim effect" when talking about the gifts that are received in Baptism (see pp. 9-10).

Thus, the contrast between BEM and The Book of Concord has been demonstrated as concerns the proper distinction between Law and Gospel in their respective confessions of Baptism. BEM was shown to describe man's natural condition as "brokenness," while The Book of Concord went to great length to confess natural man's utter lostness and the fact that he exists under the wrath and condemnation of God and is unable to change it (compare pp. 12 and 20). There was no further description of man's lostness in BEM nor his absolute need for Baptism.

On the other hand, BEM seemed to give man some of the credit for the blessings of Holy Baptism when it described Baptism as "God's gift and our human response to that gift" (see pp. 16). This attributing to man some of the credit for the working of the Gospel amounts to an improper distinction of Law and Gospel (see pp. 8-9). In contrast, The Book of Concord confessed continually the fact that all the blessings of Baptism are God's gifts (see p. 32).



In addition, BEM often left in doubt whether or not one actually received the promised gifts of Baptism "in-full" when one was baptized. For example, whether or not one received the forgiveness of sins (see pp. 17-18), whether or not the Spirit is given (see pp. 14-15), and whether or not Baptism was actually "effective" or just a "sign" or "image" of that which is effective (see p. 19), were left unclear in BEM. What's more, BEM's distinction between "infant baptism" and "believer's baptism" casts into doubt whether or not infants receive the blessings of Baptism (see pp. 19-20). As a result, man was seen to be "required" to bring about the "full-fruit" of Baptism (see pp. 14-15). This amounts to a mingling of Law and Gospel (see pp. 6-7) and an ascribing to man's working (Law) what properly belongs to the Gospel. In contrast, The Book of Concord was shown to clearly distinguish Law and Gospel and confess the gifts given in Baptism as God's gifts (Gospel) and not man's achievements (Law) (see pp. 6-8).

## ENDNOTES

### THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S CONFESSION OF BAPTISM

1. The Augsburg Confession, art. II, par. 1, in Concordia Triglotta, Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 43.
2. Epitome of the Formula of Concord, art. I, par. 4-6, Concordia Triglotta, p. 783.
3. Smalcald Articles, art. III, par. 1, Concordia Triglotta, p. 477.
4. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, art. VII, par. 17, Concordia Triglotta, p. 231.
5. Epitome, art. I, par. 3, Concordia Triglotta, p. 781.
6. Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord, art. I, par. 4, Concordia Triglotta, p. 863.
7. Small Catechism, part II, par. 4, in Concordia Triglotta, p. 545.
8. Thorough Declaration, art, I. par. 6, Concordia Triglotta, p. 861.
9. Apology, art. IV, par. 36, Concordia Triglotta, p. 131.
10. Smalcald, art. III, par. 2, Concordia Triglotta, p. 479.
11. Augsburg, art. IX, par. 1, Concordia Triglotta, p. 47.
12. Small Catechism, part IV, par. 5-6, Concordia Triglotta, p. 551.
13. Large Catechism, part IV, par. 83, in Concordia Triglotta, p. 751.

14. Ibid., part IV, par. 43, p. 743.
15. Ibid., part IV, par. 10, p. 735.
16. Ibid., part IV, par. 37, p. 741.
17. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), II, C, 5, p. 2.
18. Apology, art. XIII, par. 5, Concordia Triglotta, p. 309.
19. Large Catechism, part IV, par. 53, Concordia Triglotta, p. 745.
20. Ibid., part IV, par. 26, p. 739.
21. Small Catechism, part IV, par. 9, Concordia Triglotta, p. 551.
22. BEM, II, C, 5, p. 2.
23. Large Catechism, part IV, par. 23, Concordia Triglotta, pp. 737-739.
24. Apology, art. II, par. 35, Concordia Triglotta, pp. 113-115.
25. BEM, II, C, 5, p. 2.
26. BEM, Commentary 12, p. 5.
27. Apology, art. IX, par. 51, Concordia Triglotta, p. 245.
28. Large Catechism, part IV, par. 83, Concordia Triglotta, p. 751.

## CHAPTER IV

### BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY'S CONFESSION OF THE EUCHARIST

#### Law

This section of the thesis will examine the Eucharist section of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM), evaluating its distinction between Law and Gospel. A confession of Law is made in BEM's description of man's role in the Eucharist. BEM does stress repeatedly the "sacrifice" that is offered in the Eucharist. For example, in the following quote, BEM confesses the Eucharist as a sacrificial act in which the Church offers praise, prayers, and thanksgiving. It confesses that the Eucharist is the great thanksgiving, in which Christ joins Himself with the Church, with the result that the prayers of the Church are accepted on behalf of all people:

The eucharist is the great sacrifice of praise by which the church speaks on behalf of the whole creation. For the world which God has reconciled is present at every eucharist: in the bread and wine, in the persons of the faithful, and in the prayers they offer for themselves and for all people. Christ unites the faithful with himself and includes their prayers within his own intercession so that the faithful are transfigured and their prayers accepted. This sacrifice of praise is possible only through Christ, with him and in him. The bread and wine, fruits of the earth and of human labour, are presented to the Father in faith and thanksgiving. The eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator,



a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love and peace in the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup>

In this manner, the offering of prayers, bread and wine all become representative of the entire creation being offered as a thank offering to God. BEM confesses that the Eucharist "is a representative act of thanksgiving and offering on behalf of the whole world."<sup>2</sup> Thus, the Church becomes a mediator for the world, offering the world to God in the Eucharist. This "eucharistic intercession," as it might be termed, emphasizes the actions of the Church, joining with God, to benefit the world.

The Church's "eucharistic intercession" on behalf of the world is further stressed in BEM when it confesses: "In the memorial of the eucharist, however, the Church offers its intercession in communion with Christ, our great High Priest."<sup>3</sup> BEM confesses that in the Eucharist, the Church intercedes and asks God to bring the benefits of His mighty acts of salvation to all. BEM states that in the Eucharist, "The Church, gratefully recalling God's mighty acts of redemption, beseeches God to give the benefits of these acts to every human being. In thanksgiving and intercession, the Church is united with the Son, its great High Priest and Intercessor (Rom. 8:34; Heb. 7:25)."<sup>4</sup> Thus, BEM teaches that the Church is active in the Eucharist in intercession and petition on behalf of creation. This "man-to-God" direction was shown earlier to be the way of the Law, not

the way of the Gospel (see pp. 7-8). The stress here is clearly on man's action in the Eucharist (a religion of Law) to bring the gifts of God to the world.

BEM does renounce any notion of a "re-sacrificing" of Christ in the Eucharist. BEM states, "What it was God's will to accomplish in the incarnation, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Christ, God does not repeat. These events are unique and can neither be repeated nor prolonged."<sup>5</sup> Yet, BEM does side with those who confess a representation of Christ's sacrifice as taking place in the Eucharist: "Representation and anticipation are expressed in thanksgiving and intercession. The Church, gratefully recalling God's mighty acts of redemption, beseeches God to give the benefits of these acts to every human being."<sup>6</sup> In this way, the Church represents the mighty acts of Christ to God and then pleads with God to visit the benefits of these mighty acts upon creation. Once again, the Church is confessed as having a significant role in God's bestowal of His grace upon the people of the world. This, once again, points to a religion of Law, in which man and God work together in the Eucharist. This was shown earlier to be contrary to the way of the Gospel and contrary to the way God desires to be worshipped (see pp. 7-8).

Not only does BEM grant the Church a vital part in the intercession of thanks and petition on behalf of the world, but BEM also gives the Church a prominent role in

effecting the "real presence" through intercession. BEM confesses, "Being assured by Jesus' promise in the words of institution that it will be answered, the Church prays to the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that the eucharistic event may be a reality: the real presence of the crucified and risen Christ giving his life for all humanity."<sup>7</sup> Once again, the Eucharist is dependant upon the Church playing its role in order to bring about the gifts promised by God. One would have to see this as Law (a religion of works by man), not Gospel (a totally free gift from God). The important emphasis seems to be placed upon the "man-to-God activities" (religions of Law) before the "God-to-man gifts" can be given (Gospel) (see pp. 7-8).

As was shown in the BEM Baptismal section of this thesis (see pp. 15-16), BEM does use legalistic language in talking about the "requirements" and "demands" of the Sacraments. The Eucharistic section of BEM also contains legalistic language in discussing the ramifications of the Eucharist for the lives of Christians. BEM states:

The eucharistic celebration demands reconciliation and sharing among all those regarded as brothers and sisters in the one family of God and is a constant challenge in search of appropriate relationships in social, economic and political life . . . . The eucharist shows us that our behavior is inconsistent in face of the reconciling presence of God in human history: we are placed under continual judgment by the persistence of unjust relationships of all kinds in our society, the manifold divisions on account of human pride, material interest and power politics, and, above all, the obstinacy of unjustifiable confessional opposition within the body of Christ.<sup>8</sup>



This statement, in which the Eucharist is said to "show the Church its sin" in effect, has the Eucharist performing the second function of the Law--convicting man of sin! (see pp. 2-3).

Thus, while BEM does have an application of Law in its Eucharist section, it is not the application of Law one might expect. There is no mention of man's sinful human nature, condemnation, or his need for forgiveness, in connection with the Eucharist. Instead, the Eucharist itself becomes a "work" by the Church in many aspects. The Church is seen to be active in the Eucharist to effect the blessings of God for His people--even to assist in effecting the "real presence." While BEM does contain Law in its Eucharist section, it is a Law of works by man (the Church). The only application of Law that accuses of sin is attributed to the Eucharist itself!

#### Gospel

BEM does mention the forgiveness of sins in the Eucharist section. BEM states, "In accordance with Christ's promise, each baptized member of the body of Christ receives in the eucharist the assurance of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 26:28) and the pledge of eternal life (John 6:51-58)."<sup>9</sup> While BEM does confess that one receives the "assurance of the forgiveness of sins" and the "pledge of eternal life" in the Eucharist, it is not clear whether or

not the Eucharist actually delivers the forgiveness of sins and the eternal life. There are no further quotes with regard to forgiveness of sins and eternal life in BEM's Eucharist section that can be used to clarify this uncertainty.

This uncertainty is further accentuated when BEM begins to discuss the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. BEM states, "The eucharist is essentially the sacrament of the gift which God makes to us in Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian receives this gift of salvation through communion in the body and blood of Christ. In the eucharist meal, in the eating and drinking of the bread and wine, Christ grants communion with himself. God himself acts, giving life to the body of Christ and renewing each member."<sup>10</sup> Here, once again, it is not clear whether the body and blood and the salvation come directly in the Eucharist or if the Eucharist is just a sacrament of the gift that God has already made in the sacrifice of His body and blood on the cross--a celebration of what was once offered on the cross, but is not offered in objective reality in the Eucharist.

BEM does quote what are called "the words of institution," as found in 1 Corinthians 11:23-25, and does refer to the Eucharist as the "sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ" when it states:

The words and acts of Christ at the institution of the eucharist stand at the heart of the celebration; the

eucharistic meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence. Christ fulfills in a variety of ways his promise to be always with his own even to the end of the world. But Christ's mode of presence in the eucharist is unique. Jesus said over the bread and wine of the eucharist: 'This is my body. . . this is my blood. . . ' What Christ declared is true, and this truth is fulfilled every time the eucharist is celebrated. The Church confesses Christ's real, living and active presence in the eucharist."

While referring to Christ's presence as "unique" and fulfilled "in a variety of ways," BEM never says specifically that the body and blood of Christ are received when the bread and wine are received. The "real, living and active presence of Christ in the eucharist" could be interpreted as the presence of His "person" when the meal is celebrated, not the giving of His actual body and blood to the communicant. This uncertainty is never clarified further in BEM.

BEM continues this ambiguity in its confession of the "real presence" in two commentary sections. BEM seems content to just review the historical and theological differences with regard to the presence of Christ's body and blood in the Eucharist without actually making its own confession regarding the presence of the body and blood of Christ. BEM states:

Many churches believe that by the words of Jesus and by the power of the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine of the eucharist become, in a real though mysterious manner, the body and blood of the risen Christ, i.e., of the living Christ present in all his fullness. Under the signs of bread and wine, the deepest reality is the total being of Christ who comes to us in order to feed us and transform our entire being. Some other churches, while affirming a real presence of Christ at the



eucharist, do not link that presence so definitely with the signs of bread and wine. The decision remains for the churches whether this difference can be accommodated within the convergence formulated in the text itself.<sup>12</sup>

In like manner, BEM continues its practice of just stating theological differences without taking sides when it states:

In the history of the Church there have been various attempts to understand the mystery of the real and unique presence of Christ in the eucharist. Some are content merely to affirm this presence without seeking to explain it. Others consider it necessary to assert a change wrought by the Holy Spirit and Christ's words, in consequence of which there is no longer just ordinary bread and wine but the body and blood of Christ. Others again have developed an explanation of the real presence which, though not claiming to exhaust the significance of the mystery, seeks to protect it from damaging interpretations.<sup>13</sup>

BEM does not indicate that the body and blood of Christ are the true content of the Eucharist, but rather the "anamnesis of Christ" (remembrance of Christ) is the content of the Eucharist. BEM states, "Since the anamnesis of Christ is the very content of the preached Word as it is of the eucharistic meal, each reinforces the other."<sup>14</sup> Here, BEM confesses that it is actually the anamnesis of Christ, not His body and blood, that is the content of the Eucharist. This amounts to a rejection of the gifts given by God in the Eucharist and this rejection was shown to be contrary to the way of the Gospel (see pp. 8-9).

In discussing the presence of Christ in the Eucharist, BEM confesses that it is the Spirit of Christ

that effects the presence of Christ in the Eucharist. BEM states:

The Spirit makes the crucified and risen Christ really present to us in the eucharistic meal, fulfilling the promise contained in the words of institution . . . . The Holy Spirit is the immeasurable strength of love which makes it possible and continues to make it effective. The bond between the eucharistic celebration and the mystery of the Triune God reveals the role of the Holy Spirit as that of the One who makes the historical words of Jesus present and alive. Being assured by Jesus' promise in the words of institution that it will be answered, the Church prays to the Father for the gift of the Holy Spirit in order that the eucharistic event may be a reality: the real presence of the crucified and risen Christ giving his life for all humanity.<sup>15</sup>

In a similar way, BEM confesses, "It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion."<sup>16</sup> Thus, BEM teaches that the Holy Spirit is the one who effects the real presence. As was shown above, the Church is also seen as playing a major role in intercession to move the Holy Spirit to bring about this "real presence."

In a related statement, BEM discusses the role that faith plays with regard to the real presence in the Eucharist. BEM states that "While Christ's real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required."<sup>17</sup> Thus, while BEM leaves the

real presence of Christ in rather vague terms, it confesses the necessity of faith to discern this presence of Christ.

BEM's Eucharist section continues the tendency of the Baptism section to use symbolic language. As a matter of fact, the Eucharist itself is described as a sign, when BEM states: "The eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: an offering and hymn of praise to the Creator, a universal communion in the body of Christ, a kingdom of justice, love, and peace in the Holy Spirit."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the Eucharist is seen as a sign to God on behalf of the world.

The Eucharist is also seen as a sign to the world of the sacrifice of Christ. BEM confesses that "The eucharist is the memorial of the crucified and risen Christ i.e. the living and effective sign of his sacrifice, accomplished once and for all on the cross and still operative on behalf of all humankind."<sup>19</sup> Once again, in talking about the body and blood of Christ, BEM uses symbolic language in stating that "It is in virtue of the living word of Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit that the bread and wine become the sacramental signs of Christ's body and blood. They remain so for the purpose of communion."<sup>20</sup> BEM also refers to the Eucharist as "a liturgical meal employing symbolic words and actions. Consequently the eucharist is a sacramental meal which by visible signs communicates to us God's love in Jesus Christ, the love by which Jesus loved his own 'to the end' (John 13:1)."<sup>21</sup> Thus, BEM confesses the



Eucharist to be a "double sign"--a sign to God of the world that is offered to Him out of gratitude and a sign to mankind of the sacrifice, the body and blood of Christ, and God's love for mankind. This use of symbolic language leads one to uncertainty with regard to whether or not the blessings of the Eucharist are actually given in the Eucharist, or merely symbolized. This uncertainty is not a Gospel confession as the Gospel was defined previously (see pp. 7-9).

BEM confesses that the Eucharist itself is received as a "gift" by the Church. BEM states:

The Church receives the eucharist as a gift from the Lord. St. Paul wrote: "I have received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said: 'This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance (anamnesis) of me.' In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying: 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me' (I Cor. 11:23-25; cf. Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20).<sup>22</sup>

BEM does confess what might be called the "Gospelness" of the Eucharist in referring not to the gifts offered in the meal, but referring to the meal itself. BEM reminds all that, "The one who presides at the eucharistic celebration in the name of Christ makes clear that the rite is not the assemblies' own creation or possession; the eucharist is received as a gift from Christ living in his Church."<sup>23</sup> Thus, the Eucharist itself is confessed as a gift received from God by the Church.

BEM also confesses the gift of Spiritual nourishment and strength as being given in the Eucharist. BEM teaches that "In the eucharist, Christ empowers us to live with him, to suffer with him, and to pray through him as justified sinners, joyfully and freely fulfilling his will."<sup>24</sup> Yet, "through the Eucharist, we offer ourselves as a living and holy sacrifice in our daily lives (Rom. 12:1; I Peter 2:5); this spiritual worship, acceptable to God, is nourished in the eucharist, in which we are sanctified and reconciled in love, in order to be servants of reconciliation in the world."<sup>25</sup> While BEM confesses that the Eucharist is an offering on the part of the Church (see Law section above), it also confesses that "The eucharist is precious food for missionaries, bread and wine for pilgrims on their apostolic journey. The eucharistic community is nourished and strengthened for confessing by word and action the Lord Jesus Christ who gave his life for the salvation of the world."<sup>26</sup> As a result, "Christian faith is deepened by the celebration of the Lord's Supper."<sup>27</sup> This confession of the gifts offered by God in the Eucharist has been shown to be consistent with the Gospel (see pp. 7-8).

BEM confesses that in addition to strength and nourishment for Christians, the sharing of the Eucharist together as Christians actually produces a unity and oneness. BEM states that "The sharing in one bread and the common cup in a given place demonstrates and effects the

oneness of the sharers with Christ and with their fellow sharers in all times and places."<sup>28</sup> The denial of this unity is confessed in BEM as existent when Christians do not share in the same Eucharist loaf: "Insofar as Christians cannot unite in full fellowship around the same table to eat the same loaf and drink from the same cup, their missionary witness is weakened at both the individual and the corporate levels."<sup>29</sup> This attempt by man to manufacture a gift of the Eucharist (unity) instead of receiving it as a gift from God was shown to be an improper distinction between Law and Gospel (see pp. 8-9).



## ENDNOTES

### BEM'S CONFESSION OF THE EUCHARIST

1. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper No. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), II, A, 4, pp. 10-11.

2. Ibid., II, D, 20, p. 14. The Lutheran Church of Australia (LCOA) observes regarding BEM's sacrificial emphasis in the Eucharist: "The eucharist as 'thanksgiving to the Father' is the first of five aspects under which the meaning of the eucharist is developed (E3). Here it is claimed that 'the world is present in every sacrifice;' that 'the Church speaks on behalf of the whole creation;' that 'Christ unites the faithful with himself and includes their prayers within his own intercessions;' and that 'bread and wine, fruits of the earth and human labour, are presented to the Father in faith and thanksgiving'(E4). This is the sacrifice of the church. 'The Eucharist thus signifies what the world is to become: . . . a universal communion in the body of Christ. . . ' (E4). No biblical basis is given for these statements. Moreover, they run the risk of implying that the eucharist is something which the church offers to God rather than the sacrament of God's gracious gift to the church." (Max Thurian, ed., Churches Respond to BEM, 2 vols. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986), 2:90).

3. BEM, II, B, 8, p. 12. The LCMS reacts to the sacrificial nature of the Eucharist presented in this section by stating: "Closely related is our concern with the description of the eucharist as a 'sacrifice.' The text does specify it as a 'sacrifice of praise. . . possible only through Christ, with Him and in Him' (E4) whose self-sacrifice has been 'accomplished once and for all on the cross and (is) still operative on behalf of all mankind (E5, cf. E10). We have no problem with such formulations, but we are still desirous that the priority of 'sacrament' over 'sacrifice' and a clear theological distinction between the two be unambiguously spelled out. Acceptable and even laudable though it is in one sense, the Lord's Supper, we believe, should not primarily or ordinarily be referred to as a 'sacrifice.' The attempt of E8 (Comm.) to explain sacrifice as propitiatory is, at best, only a bare beginning to the resolution of that problem (LCMS Response to the

Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches to the text of 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1985), p. 13.

4. Ibid., II, B, 8, p. 11.

5. Ibid., II, V, 8, pp. 11-12.

6. Ibid., II, B, 8, p. 11.

7. Ibid., II, C, 14, p. 13. Ernst Volk, in commenting on the intercession of the Church to assist with the effecting of the "real presence", writes: "By virtue of his Words of Institution and Promise, Christ is present in the Supper. He comes to us in bread and wine, also, without our faith (in that case, of course, in judgment). He is present also without our prayer, because he makes himself present through his word of praise. Our re-presentation is not necessary. But we pray for the Holy Spirit, that we may receive Christ, his body and his blood in the true faith. That, creating salvation, forgiving, and granting life, he also may come to us. In this sense, but only in this sense, is the epiclesis, the invocation, the calling-down of the Holy Spirit, legitimate. The notion that the elements of bread and wine are transformed into the body and blood of Christ through the epiclesis must be rejected. They are body and blood through the promise of Christ!" (Ernst Volk, "Evangelical Accents in the Understanding of the Holy Communion," Lutheran Quarterly 1 (Summer, 1987):196.).

8. Ibid., II, D, 20, p. 14.

9. Ibid., II, 2, p. 10. Ernst Volk, in commenting on the amount of emphasis in the Eucharist section between the "forgiveness of sins" and the "action of the church", states: "Christ's Words of Institution, granted, are referred to at an important point at the beginning of the Explanation of the Eucharist (E1). The decisive gift of the Holy Supper, the forgiveness of sins, however, is mentioned only once, almost in passing, and then disappears wholly from the exposition. What dominates is the notion of the eucharist as action of the church" (Volk, p. 192).

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., II, B, 13, p. 12. The LCMS responds by saying, "A major problem throughout this section is BEM's ambiguity about the nature of Christ's presence in the sacrament. Even though expressions such as 'real presence' and 'the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ' are used, the document never clearly articulates more than the



presence of the person of Christ, nor does it speak of a physical eating of His body and blood other than by faith. More than some purely 'symbolic' meaning is affirmed, but it is not clear how much more. The addition of adjectives such as 'effective', 'unique,' 'living,' etc., do not go far enough. We appreciate the attempt to avoid philosophical speculation about the precise nature of the mystery (precisely the intent of Lutheranism's traditional; in, with, and under'), but that may not become a cloak for a pluralism of incompatible theological views. The question posed in Comm. 13 whether confession and denial of the presence of Christ's body and blood can be accommodated must be denied. In the light of all of this, it is not surprising that nothing at all is said about the *manducatio impiorum* (that also the unbelieving receive Christ's body and blood, but to their judgment), nor about its sequel, the necessity of church discipline and of 'close(d) communion'" (LCMS Response, pp. 12-13). Commenting on this section, the LCOA states that "It is in this section that the words of institution are taken up. They 'stand at the heart of the celebration,' 'the eucharist meal is the sacrament of the body and blood of Christ, the sacrament of his real presence.' 'Christ's mode of presence in the eucharist is unique.' And finally: 'While Christ's real presence in the eucharist does not depend on the faith of the individual, all agree that to discern the body and blood of Christ, faith is required' (E13). These statements, however, are ambiguous. The affirmation that the whole eucharist is symbolical (E1) seems to be a denial that the communicant receives the real body and blood of Christ. Therefore there is also no hint in the document of the unworthy eating and drinking the body and blood of Christ. The use of the term 'real presence' never refers to anything else in the statement but to the presence of Christ, 'the living Christ present in all his fullness;' 'the deepest reality is the total being of Christ who comes to us in order to feed us and transform our entire being' (commentary to 13). There is no real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the bread eaten and the wine drunk. We believe that no presentation of the eucharist can be regarded as satisfactory that does not give clear expression to the real presence of the body and blood of Christ (not merely the person of Christ) in the bread and wine of the elements, and to the physical eating and drinking of the body and blood of Christ (not only eating by faith), including the *manducatio indignorum*" (Churches Respond, 2:91).

12. *Ibid.*, Commentary 13, p. 12. The LCMS comments, "Possibly the most serious deficiency of this section is the almost complete absence of discussion about what we regard as one of the major benefits of the eucharist,



namely, that in it God graciously offers 'forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation' (LCMS Response, p. 13.).

13. Ibid., Commentary 13, p. 13.
14. Ibid., II, B, 12, p. 12.
15. Ibid., II, C, 14, p. 13.
16. Ibid., II, C, 15, p. 13.
17. Ibid., II, B, 13, p. 12.
18. Ibid., II, A, 4, p. 11.
19. Ibid., II, B, 5, p. 11.
20. Ibid., II, C, 15, p. 13.
21. Ibid., I, 1, p. 10.
22. Ibid.
23. Ibid., III, 29, p. 16.
24. Ibid., II, B, 9, p. 12.
25. Ibid., II, B, 10, p. 12.
26. Ibid., II, E, 26, p. 15.
27. Ibid., III, 30, p. 16.
28. Ibid., II, D, 19, p. 14.
29. Ibid., II, E, 26, p. 15.

## CHAPTER V

### THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S CONFESSION OF THE EUCHARIST

#### Law

This section will discuss The Book of Concord's confession of Law and Gospel concerning the Eucharist. The Book of Concord confesses repeatedly man's unworthiness and need for the forgiveness offered in the Eucharist (Law). The Book of Concord, in discussing how people should not absent themselves from the Sacrament of the Altar because of their sorrow for their sinfulness declares: "Therefore such people must learn that it is the highest art to know that our Sacrament does not depend upon our worthiness. For we are not baptized because we are worthy and holy, nor do we go to confession because we are pure and without sin, but the contrary, because we are poor miserable men, and just because we are unworthy; unless it be some one who desires no grace and absolution nor intends to reform."<sup>1</sup> Likewise, The Book of Concord states, "Therefore those alone are called unworthy who neither feel their infirmities nor wish to be considered sinners."<sup>2</sup> The Book of Concord, in contrast to Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM), concludes

that man is a sinner and is unworthy of the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper by his nature. This confession of Law is absent in the BEM section dealing with the Eucharist.

The Book of Concord also makes repeated confession regarding the judgment that the "unworthy eating and drinking" brings in the Eucharist (Law). The Book of Concord explains this unworthiness as follows:

For that not only the godly, pious, and believing Christians, but also unworthy, godless hypocrites, as Judas and his ilk, who have no spiritual communion with Christ, and go to the Table of the Lord without true repentance and conversion to God, also receive orally in the Sacrament the true body and (true) blood of Christ, and by their unworthy eating and drinking grievously sin against the body and blood of Christ, St. Paul teaches expressly. For he says, I Cor. 11:27: "Whosoever shall eat this bread, and drinks this cup of the Lord, unworthily," sins not merely against the bread and wine, not merely against the signs or symbols and emblems of the body and blood, but "shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ," which, as there (in the Holy Supper) present, he dishonors, abuses, and disgraces, as the Jews, who in very deed violated the body of Christ and killed Him; just as the ancient Christian Fathers and church-teachers unanimously have understood and explained this passage.<sup>3</sup>

It is because it confesses the reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist, by both the believer and the non-believer, that The Book of Concord stresses the secondary nature of the Eucharist: Judgment upon the non-believer (Law). This confession of Law (see p. 3) is absent from BEM. The Book of Concord describes this judgment as follows:

7. We believe, teach, and confess that not only the true believers (in Christ) and the worthy, but also the unworthy and unbelievers, receive the true body and blood of Christ; however, not for life and consolation,



but for judgment and condemnation, if they are not converted and do not repent, I Cor. 11:27,29.

For although they thrust Christ from themselves as a Savior, yet they must admit Him even against their will as a strict Judge, who is just as present also to exercise and render judgment upon impenitent guests as He is present to work life and consolation in the hearts of the true believers and worthy guests.

8. We believe, teach, and confess also that there is only one kind of unworthy guests, namely, those who do not believe, concerning whom it is written John 3:18: "He that believeth not is condemned already." And this judgment becomes greater and more grievous, being aggravated, by the unworthy use of the Holy Supper, I Cor. 11:29.<sup>4</sup>

This confession of man's judgment and condemnation before God is a confession of Law (see p. 3) and is absent from BEM. The Book of Concord discusses the sinful nature of man at work in him not only to condemn Him before God, but also to dull and deaden the need he feels for attending the Lord's Supper. Here, The Book of Concord directs that man believe what the Scriptures teach concerning his sinful flesh:

Therefore, if you cannot feel it (the need for the Lord's Supper), at least believe the Scriptures; they will not lie to you, and they know your flesh (Fleisch) better than you yourself. Yea, St. Paul further concludes in Rom. 7:18: "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing." If St. Paul may speak thus of his flesh, we do not propose to be better or more holy. But that we do not feel it is so much the worse; for it is a sign that there is a leprous flesh which feels nothing, and yet (the leprosy) rages and keeps spreading. Yet, as we have said, if you are quite dead to all sensibility, still believe the Scriptures, which pronounce sentence upon you. And, in short, the less you feel your sins and infirmities, the more reason have you to go to the Sacrament to seek help and a remedy.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, while BEM is silent in a confession of the sinful nature of man and man's need for the Lord's Supper, The Book of Concord has been shown to consider at length the sinful nature of man which condemns man and continues to war against man's reception of the Lord's Supper (Law) (see p. 3).

#### Gospel

BEM was found to confess that the "assurance" of the forgiveness of sins and the "pledge" of eternal life were given one in the Eucharist (see pp. 46-47). By comparison, The Book of Concord states, "What is the benefit of such eating and drinking? Answer: That is shown us in these words: Given and shed for you for the remission of sins; namely, that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation."<sup>6</sup> In further discussing this treasure of forgiveness that is delivered in the Eucharist, The Book of Concord states that "For this reason we go to the Sacrament because there we receive such a treasure by and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins. Why so? Because the words stand here and give us this; for on this account He bids me eat and drink, that it may be my own and may benefit me, as a sure pledge and token, yea, the very same treasure that is appointed for me against my sins, death, and every

calamity."<sup>7</sup> This "very same treasure" can be nothing other than the body and blood of Christ by and through which, the communicant receives the "forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation." Thus, The Book of Concord confesses the same blessings coming to man in the Lord's Supper as come to him when he hears and believes the spoken Word.

The Book of Concord also confesses that the entire Gospel is actually delivered in the Eucharist. In discussing the oral Word and the Eucharist, The Book of Concord states:

For although the work is accomplished and the forgiveness of sins acquired on the cross, yet it cannot come to us in any other way than through the Word. For what would we otherwise know about it, that such a thing was accomplished or was to be given us if it were not presented by preaching or the oral Word? Whence do they know of it, or how can they apprehend and appropriate to themselves the forgiveness, except they lay hold of and believe the Scriptures and the Gospel? But now the entire Gospel (das ganze Evangelium, totum evangelium) and the article of the Creed: I believe a holy Christian Church, the forgiveness of sin, etc., are by the Word embodied in this Sacrament and presented to us.<sup>8</sup>

Thus, while BEM was not precise in confessing whether the forgiveness of sins or just the assurance of the forgiveness of sins, or whether salvation or just the pledge of salvation, is delivered in the Eucharist (see pp. 46-47), The Book of Concord is certain to confess that the "entire Gospel" is received in and through the Eucharist.

The same contrast exists between BEM and The Book of Concord when it comes to confessing the reception of the



body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist. BEM was found to be vague when it described the "real presence." Christ was confessed to be "present" in the Eucharist, but not His body and blood (see pp. 48-49). In contrast, The Book of Concord states repeatedly that the body and blood of Christ are present and received by the person receiving the bread and wine in the Lord's Supper. The Book of Concord defines the Lord's Supper as "the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, for us Christians to eat and to drink, instituted by Christ Himself."<sup>9</sup>

In a similar manner, The Book of Concord states: "Of the Sacrament of the Altar we hold that bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ, and are given and received not only by the godly, but also by wicked Christians (bösen Christen, impiis Christianis)."<sup>10</sup> There is no doubt in The Book of Concord's confession that when the Lord's Supper is celebrated, there also the body and blood of Christ are present and given out.

The Book of Concord rejects any view of the Lord's Supper that denies the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper or says that the body and blood of Christ are received only in a "spiritual" way. In stating what is condemned as false doctrine, The Book of Concord rejects the teaching, "That in the Holy Supper the body of Christ is not received orally with the bread; but

that with the mouth only bread and wine are received, the body of Christ, however, only spiritually by faith."<sup>11</sup>

In stating in a positive way what the Lutherans confess to be given and received in the Eucharist, The Book of Concord states: "Of the Supper of the Lord they teach that the Body and blood of Christ are truly present, and are distributed to those who eat in the Supper of the Lord; and they reject those that teach otherwise."<sup>12</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord would reject any confession of the Eucharist that does not confess the presence of the true body and blood of Christ.

The Book of Concord confesses that the true body and blood of Christ are present not only according to their "appearance" or "form", but also according to their very substance when it states that:

. . . In the Lord's Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially present, and are truly tendered, with those things which are seen, bread and wine, to those who receive the Sacrament . . . . We have cited these testimonies, not to undertake a discussion here concerning this subject, for His Imperial Majesty does not disapprove of this article, but in order that all who may read them may the more clearly perceive that we defend the doctrine received in the entire Church, that in the Lord's Supper the body and blood of Christ are truly and substantially (vere et substantialiter) present, and are truly tendered with those things which are seen, bread and wine. And we speak of the presence of the living Christ (living body) (vivi Christi): "for we know that death hath no more dominion over Him" (Rom. 6:9).<sup>13</sup>

Thus, while BEM is vague with regard to details of the "real presence" of Christ in the Eucharist, The Book of Concord

confesses that the body and blood of Christ are present and received when the bread and wine are received in Holy Communion.

The Book of Concord also makes it plain that the blessings received in the Lord's Supper are possible only as a result of the Word and promise of Christ. The Book of Concord states, "How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? Answer: It is not the eating and drinking, indeed, that does them, but the words which stand here, namely: 'Given, and shed for you, for the remission of sins.' Which words are, beside the bodily eating and drinking, as the chief thing in the Sacrament; and he that believes these words has what they say and express, namely, the forgiveness of sins."<sup>14</sup> While the role of faith will be discussed later, at this point, it will suffice to note The Book of Concord's confession of the Word as that which makes the blessings of the Lord's Supper, the body and blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, possible.

In like manner, it is the Word, according to The Book of Concord, that distinguishes the mere elements (bread and wine) from the Sacrament in which the body and blood of Christ are received. The Book of Concord confesses that "It is the Word (I say) which makes and distinguishes this Sacrament, so that it is not mere bread and wine, but is, and is called, the body and blood of Christ. For it is said: 'Accedat verbum ad elementum, et fit sacramentum. If



the Word be joined to the element, it becomes a Sacrament.' This saying of St. Augustine is so properly and so well put that he has scarcely said anything better. The Word must make a Sacrament of the element, else it remains a mere element."<sup>15</sup> Thus, the Word and promise of Christ is what distinguishes the blessings offered in the Lord's Supper from the everyday eating of bread and wine without these blessings being given.

While BEM is content to merely list the different views with regard to the real presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, The Book of Concord emphatically states its opposition to those who would deny that the body and blood of Christ are present and received in the Lord's Supper. While talking in a very pastoral manner to the person who is faced with the denial of the reception of Christ's body and blood by some, The Book of Concord moves to reassure the soul by stating:

With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and say: If a hundred thousand devils, together with all fanatics, should rush forward crying, how can bread and wine be the body and blood of Christ? etc., I know that all spirits and scholars together are not as wise as is the Divine Majesty in His little finger. Now here stands the Word of Christ: "Take, eat; this is My body; Drink ye all of it; this is the New Testament in My blood," etc. Here we abide and would like to see those who will constitute themselves His masters, and make it different from what He has spoken.<sup>16</sup>

In a similar manner, The Book of Concord rejects any view that would teach that it is not the words of Christ, but rather the recipient's faith that makes the real

presence of the body and blood of Christ a reality. In listing what it rejects as false and contrary to the Word of God, The Book of Concord states that it rejects the view "That not the omnipotent words of Christ's testament, but faith, produces and makes (is the cause of) the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Supper."<sup>17</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord properly distinguishes between Law and Gospel when it comes to the Eucharist--confessing God as the Giver of the gifts and man as the recipient of these blessings through faith (see pp. 7-8).

While rejecting the notion that faith produces the blessings of the Lord's Supper, The Book of Concord does say that faith claims the blessings spoken of and given in the Word and promise of Christ in the Lord's Supper. For example, The Book of Concord states:

And because He offers and promises forgiveness of sin, it cannot be received otherwise than by faith. This faith He Himself demands (fordert) in the word when He says: "Given and shed for you." As if He said: "For this reason I give it, and bid you eat and drink, that you may claim it as yours and enjoy it." Whoever now accepts these words, and believes that what they declare is true, has it. But whoever does not believe it has nothing, as he allows it to be offered to him in vain, and refuses to enjoy such a saving good. The treasure, indeed, is opened and placed at every one's door, yea, upon his table, but it is necessary that you also claim it, and confidently view it as the words suggest to you.<sup>18</sup>

Accordingly, The Book of Concord concludes that since the blessings of Baptism are brought about by the words of Christ, the only way they can be received is by

faith. The Book of Concord confesses: "For since this treasure is entirely presented in the words, it cannot be apprehended and appropriated in any other way than with the heart. For such a gift and eternal treasure cannot be seized with the fist."<sup>19</sup>

The Book of Concord also confesses that Lutherans reject any view that professes that the benefits of the Lord's Supper are received apart from faith. In stating what Lutherans believe, teach, and confess, The Book of Concord states, "They therefore condemn those who teach that the sacraments justify by the outward act, and who do not teach that, in the use of the Sacraments, faith which believes that sins are forgiven, is required."<sup>20</sup> Thus, both BEM and The Book of Concord would say that faith is "required" to receive the benefits of the Lord's Supper (see p. 50), but the benefits received have been shown to differ (see above).

It follows from the confession of faith as required to receive the blessings of the Lord's Supper, that "worthy reception" of the Lord's Supper does not depend on outward preparations but rather on the presence of faith in the recipient. The Book of Concord confesses, "We believe, teach, and confess that all the worthiness of the guests of this heavenly feast is and consists in the most holy obedience and perfect merit of Christ alone, which we appropriate to ourselves by true faith, and whereof (of the



application of this merit) we are assured by the Sacrament, and not at all in (but in no way does this worthiness depend upon) our virtues or inward and outward preparations."<sup>21</sup> In reinforcing this teaching, The Book of Concord answers the question, "Who, then, receives such Sacrament worthily? Answer: Fasting and bodily preparation is, indeed, a fine outward training; but he is truly worthy and well prepared who has faith in these words: 'Given and shed for you, for the remission of sins.'"<sup>22</sup>

Thus, while faith does not produce the blessings of the body and blood of Christ and the forgiveness of sins, it does receive them and is the only way that these blessings are received in the Lord's Supper. To say that faith produced these blessings, would be to make the Lord's Supper into a work of man's faith (Law) and not a gift through man's faith (Gospel) (see pp. 7-8).

The Book of Concord also regards the Lord's Supper as delivering strength and comfort to Christians for their daily struggle with Satan. In describing this nourishment, The Book of Concord states:

On this account it is indeed called a food of souls, which nourishes and strengthens the new man . . . . For the new life must be so regulated that it continually increase and progress; but it must suffer much opposition. For the devil is such a furious enemy that when he sees that we oppose him and attack the old man, and that he cannot topple us over by force, he prowls and moves about on all sides, tries all devices, and does not desist, until he finally wearies us, so that we either renounce our faith or yield hands and feet and become listless or impatient. Now to this end the consolation is here given when the heart feels that the

burden is becoming too heavy, that it may here obtain new power and refreshment.<sup>23</sup>

In a similar statement to those who are feeling the need for spiritual strength, The Book of Concord states that "If, therefore, you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, then go joyfully to this Sacrament and obtain refreshment, consolation, and strength."<sup>24</sup>

The Book of Concord confesses the comfort that is offered to terrified sinners when it concludes that, "The Sacrament was instituted to console and comfort terrified minds, when they believe that the flesh of Christ, given for the life of the world, is food, when they believe that, being joined to Christ (through this food), they are made alive."<sup>25</sup> The Book of Concord advises that no penitent believer need fear coming to the Lord's Supper when it states: "We believe, teach, and confess that no true believer, as long as he retains living faith, however weak he may be, receives the Holy Supper to his judgment, which was instituted especially for Christians weak in faith, yet penitent, for the consolation and strengthening of their weak faith (Matt. 9:12; 11:5, 28)."<sup>26</sup>

The Book of Concord, as was noted above, clearly rejects any symbolic language regarding the body and blood of Christ as present in the Lord's Supper. In this sense, The Book of Concord firmly rejects any symbolic language that would say that the bread and wine are mere symbols for

the body and blood of Christ. For example, The Book of Concord rejects the teaching "That the bread and wine in the Holy Supper are nothing more than (symbols or) tokens by which Christians recognize one another," and likewise rejected is the teaching "That the bread and wine are only figures of similitude, and representations of the far absent body and blood of Christ."<sup>27</sup>

The Book of Concord does, however, speak of the Sacraments as "signs" toward man, pointing to the will that God has for all men. The Book of Concord states, "Of the use of the Sacraments they teach that the Sacraments were ordained, not only to be marks of profession among men, but rather to be signs (signa, Zeichen) and testimonies of the will of God toward us, instituted to awaken and confirm faith in those who use them."<sup>28</sup> This use of "signs" is to be differentiated from that use that applies to the body and blood being received in the Lord's Supper.

Thus, there is a great contrast in BEM's confession of the Eucharist and The Book of Concord's confession of the Eucharist. There is also a contrast between the two when it comes to the proper distinction of Law and Gospel in the Eucharist. BEM stressed man's (the church's) action in the Eucharist through intercession on behalf of the world (see pp. 44-45). This mingles Law and Gospel by ascribing to man's activity that which is properly given by God in the Gospel (see pp. 8-9). In contrast, The Book of Concord



stressed God's action in delivering the body and blood of Christ, forgiveness of sin, life, and salvation in the Lord's Supper.

BEM confessed that the bread and wine were "sacramental signs" of the body and blood of Christ and that the content of the Eucharist was the anamnesis of Christ (see p. 49). This amounts to a rejection of the gifts offered by God in the Eucharist and was shown to be contrary to the way of the Gospel (see pp. 8-9). The Book of Concord stressed the presence and reception of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper--the "treasure by and in which we obtain the forgiveness of sins" (see p. 63). For this reason, BEM contains no Law statements regarding the unworthy partaking of the body and blood of Christ to one's judgment (Law). Ironically, the Eucharist itself is seen to fulfill a function of the Law in making man aware of his sins in his relationships in society (see pp. 45-46). This points once again to an improper distinction between Law and Gospel. In this way, the errors in the distinction of Law and Gospel in BEM's confession of the Eucharist are evident when compared to The Book of Concord's confession of the Eucharist.

## ENDNOTES

### THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S CONFESSION OF THE EUCHARIST

1. Large Catechism, part V, par. 61, in Concordia Triglotta, Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 767.
2. Ibid., part V, par. 74, p. 771.
3. Thorough Declaration of the Formula of Concord, art. VII, par. 60, Concordia Triglotta, pp. 993-995.
4. Epitome of the Formula of Concord, art. VII, par. 16-18, Concordia Triglotta, p. 813.
5. Large Catechism, part V, par. 76-78, Concordia Triglotta, p. 771.
6. Small Catechism, part VI, par. 6, Concordia Triglotta, p. 557.
7. Large Catechism, part V, par. 22, Concordia Triglotta, p. 757.
8. Ibid., part V, par. 31, p. 759.
9. Small Catechism, part VI, par. 2, Concordia Triglotta, p. 555.
10. Smalcald Articles, art. VI, par. 2, Concordia Triglotta, p. 493.
11. Epitome, art. VII, par. 5, Concordia Triglotta, p. 815.
12. Augsburg Confession, art. X, par. 1, Concordia Triglotta, p. 47.
13. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, art. X, par. 54, 57, Concordia Triglotta, p. 247.
14. Small Catechism, part VI, par. 8, Concordia Triglotta, p. 557.

15. Large Catechism, part V, par. 10, Concordia Triglotta, p. 755.
16. Ibid., part V, par. 12, p. 755.
17. Epitome, art. VII, par. 12, p. 755.
18. Large Catechism, part V, par. 34, Concordia Triglotta, p. 761.
19. Ibid., part V, par. 36, p. 761.
20. Augsburg Confession, art. XIII, par. 3, Concordia Triglotta, p. 49.
21. Epitome, art. VII, par. 20, Concordia Triglotta, p. 49.
22. Small Catechism, part VI, par. 10, Concordia Triglotta, p. 557.
23. Large Catechism, part V, par. 23, Concordia Triglotta, p. 759.
24. Ibid., art. V, par. 72, p. 769.
25. Apology, art. XXII, par. 10, Concordia Triglotta, p. 361.
26. Epitome, art. VII, par. 19, Concordia Triglotta, p. 813.
27. Ibid., art. VII, par. 27-28, p. 815.
28. Augsburg Confession, art. XIII, par. 2, Concordia Triglotta, p. 49.



## CHAPTER VI

### BAPTISM, EUCHARIST AND MINISTRY'S CONFSSION OF MINISTRY

#### Law

This section of the thesis will compare Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry's (BEM) confession of "Ministry" with that found in The Book of Concord, especially with regard to the Law and Gospel confession made by each. BEM utilizes the phrase "the calling of the whole people of God" to describe the calling to faith and ministry of service that all Christians share together as members of Christ's Church on earth.<sup>1</sup> This section begins with a statement describing man's world and God's calling to man in the midst of that world: "In a broken world, God calls the whole of humanity to become God's people."<sup>2</sup> The term broken world was observed earlier in the Baptism section (see p. 13). As was true in the Baptism section, the term broken world is the only one used in this section to describe man's condition before the Holy Spirit calls him. It occurs only this one time in the entire section. As was noted in the Baptism section of this thesis (see p. 13), the term broken world can be understood to mean many different things when used to

describe "sin," "corruption," and "evil." The extent and specificity of the term broken world are not clarified in BEM.

The only other statement in BEM that refers to man's sinfulness is a term describing man's continued struggle with his sinful nature following his calling to faith by the Holy Spirit. BEM states, "The Spirit keeps the Church in the true faith and guides it despite the frailty of its members."<sup>3</sup> As with the term broken world above, the term frailty is open to a variety of different interpretations. BEM is not specific in defining what it means when it says that church members are "frail." Thus, BEM is not specific in its confession regarding man's sinfulness and utter lostness as the need for the ministry and the preaching of the Gospel and administration of the Sacraments that accompanies it. Thus, BEM fails once again to make a clear confession of Law and reveal to man his sinfulness and utter lostness (see pp. 2-3).

#### Gospel

In its confession of the Gospel, BEM does connect membership in Christ's Church with Christ's victory over death and destruction. BEM confesses that "The life of the Church is based on Christ's victory over the powers of evil and death, accomplished once for all. Christ offers forgiveness, invites to repentance, and delivers from

destruction. Through Christ, people are able to turn in praise to God and in service to their neighbors. In Christ they find the source of new life in freedom, mutual forgiveness and love."<sup>4</sup> With this statement, BEM is basing membership in Christ's Church on His victory over sin and death. It is also making a confession as to the order of membership in Christ's Church and service to others--first Christ "invites to repentance and delivers from destruction," then people are able to turn to serve their neighbor. Yet, there is no mention of exactly how one receives "forgiveness" or "deliverance from destruction." There is no mention of exactly how Christ offers these gifts to the Church. In short, there is no mention of the means of grace or of faith (see pp. 103-104).

In another confession regarding the "foundation" of the Christian Church, BEM states, "Jesus made his own the nature, condition and cause of the whole human race, giving himself as a sacrifice for all. Jesus' life of service, his death and resurrection, are the foundation of a new community which is built up continually by the good news of the Gospel and the gifts of the sacraments."<sup>5</sup> It must be noted that "Jesus' life of service" is not included in the proper sense of the Gospel. While Christ's life of service gives the Church a tremendous example to follow in its service, the Gospel is properly that teaching that reveals that Christ has expiated and paid for all sins (see p. 4).



This "adding to" the content of the Gospel is contrary to the way of the Gospel and the way of faith (see pp. 7-9) and leads to an improper distinction of Law and Gospel.

BEM attributes the calling of men to Christ to the working of the Holy Spirit. BEM confesses that "The Spirit calls people to faith, sanctifies them through many gifts, gives them strength to witness to the Gospel, and empowers them to serve in hope and love. The Spirit keeps the Church in the truth and guides it despite the frailty of its members."<sup>6</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit is given the credit for calling people to faith and empowering them to witness and serve. In this way, BEM confesses that faith is the working of God (Gospel) and not man (Law). Yet, as was noted above, there is no mention as to the means by which the Holy Spirit calls one to faith.

In addition to calling men to faith, BEM also confesses the work of the Spirit in giving gifts that aid the members of Christ's Church in their service of God. BEM states:

The Holy Spirit bestows on the community diverse and complementary gifts. These are for the common good of the whole people and are manifested in acts of service within the community and to the world. They may be gifts of communicating the Gospel in word and deed, gifts of healing, gifts of praying, gifts of teaching and learning, gifts of serving, gifts of guidance and following, gifts of inspiration and vision. All members are called to discover, with the help of the community, the gifts they have received and to use them for the building up of the Church and for the service of the world to which the Church is sent.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, BEM does confess the gifts that the Holy Spirit gives to the members of Christ's Church in order that they might serve Him with these gifts. As was noted earlier, the language of the Gospel is the language of receiving (taking hold of) gifts given by God (see pp. 8-9). Thus, BEM acknowledges the gifts of the Holy Spirit as given by God to His Church, and in so doing, makes a Gospel confession.

In discussing the mission of the "whole people of God," BEM makes statements that sound very much like modern-day "Liberation Theology." First, BEM states that "the Church is called to proclaim and prefigure the Kingdom of God."<sup>8</sup> BEM then points to the example of Christ, and how He "offered salvation to sinners. He preached good news to the poor, release to the captives, recovery of sight to the blind, liberation to the oppressed (Luke 4:18)."<sup>9</sup> The use of the phrase, "liberation of the oppressed" could be interpreted to describe a political undertaking by man to release those held in political or economic oppression. This working on the part of man, while involving a "release," is a religion of the Law, not of the Gospel, for it points to a kingdom that is accomplished by man (Law) and not one that is given as a gift by God. This attributing to the Law that which can only be truly accomplished by the Gospel (true freedom and release) leads to an improper distinction between Law and Gospel (see pp. 7-9).

In a similar statement, BEM confesses that in carrying-out its mission, the Church is to "identify with the joys and sufferings of all people as they seek to witness in caring love. The members of Christ's body are to struggle with the oppressed towards that freedom and dignity promised with the coming of the Kingdom."<sup>10</sup> Once again, the call to "struggle with the oppressed" sounds very much like a "Liberation Theology" that would emphasize man's working to bring about a "kingdom." Once again, it sounds very much as if man is going to bring about the Kingdom--not God. This is definitely a religion of Law (stressing man's accomplishment), not Gospel (confessing God's gifts).

When considering BEM's confession of the Gospel in the section dealing with the "Ordained Ministry," it is good to know how BEM defines its terminology. BEM furnishes the following terms and definitions:

- a) The word charism denotes the gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit on any member of the body of Christ for the building up of the community and the fulfillment of its calling.
- b) The word ministry in its broadest sense denotes the service to which the whole people of God is called, whether as individuals, as a local community, or as the universal Church. Ministry or ministries can also denote the particular institutional forms which this service may take.
- c) The term ordained ministry refers to persons who have received a charism and whom the church appoints for service by ordination through the invocation of the Spirit and the laying on of hands.<sup>11</sup>



With this terminology in mind, BEM's Law and Gospel confession of the role of the ordained ministry can be examined. BEM states, "The chief responsibility of the ordained ministry is to assemble and build up the body of Christ by proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, by celebrating the sacraments, and by guiding the life of the community in its worship, its mission and its caring ministry."<sup>12</sup> The chief emphasis here seems to be the "body of Christ" (the community) which the ordained minister is to "establish," "build-up," by the "proclaiming and teaching the word of God, by "celebrating the sacraments," and by "guiding. . . its worship, its mission, and its caring ministry." This same confession is made later in BEM when it states that ordained ministers "may appropriately be called priests because they fulfill a particular priestly service by strengthening and building up the royal and prophetic priesthood of the faithful through word and sacraments, through their prayers of intercession, and through their pastoral guidance of the community."<sup>13</sup> In this instance, "prayers of intercession" and "guidance" are added to Word and Sacrament as equal in importance. Here, the minister's own work of guidance and intercession is placed on equal footing with God's working through Word and Sacrament. In other words, the work of one man is seen to be just as important and efficacious as the Law-Gospel ministry of Word and Sacrament that has been given the Church by God! This

has been shown to be an improper distinction of Law and Gospel (see pp. 8-9). More will be said of this when The Book of Concord's confession of the purpose for the ordained ministry is presented.

Yet, BEM also defines a "representative role" for the ordained clergy. BEM states that "As heralds and ambassadors, ordained ministers are representatives of Jesus Christ to the community, and proclaim his message of reconciliation. As leaders and teachers, they call the community to submit to the authority of Jesus Christ, the teacher and prophet, in whom the law and prophets were fulfilled. As pastors, under Jesus Christ the chief shepherd, they assemble and guide the dispersed people of God, in anticipation of the coming kingdom."<sup>14</sup> While this "representative role" of the clergy is confessed in BEM, it is not clear as to whether the ordained minister occupies this "representative role" in some other symbolic manner apart from Word and Sacrament ministry. In another description of this "representative role," BEM states, "On the other hand, the community needs ordained ministers. Their presence reminds the community of the divine initiative, and of the dependence of the Church on Jesus Christ, who is the source of its mission and the foundation of its unity."<sup>15</sup> Here, there is no mention of this "representative role" being connected with the Word and Sacrament ministry. In a similar statement, BEM confesses

that "Any member of the body may share in proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, may contribute to the sacramental life of that body. The ordained ministry fulfills these functions in a representative way, providing a focus for the unity of the life and witness of the community."<sup>16</sup> It is not clear from this statement how the "representative role" of the clergy is different from that of the laity, since all "contribute to the sacramental life of the body." Once again, this "representative role" does not seem to be derived solely from the ordained minister's Word and Sacrament ministry in the body of Christ. Thus, BEM views the ordained ministry as having a "representative" function to the body in connection with Jesus Christ, but the exact manner in which the ordained minister occupies this "representative role" is not defined. More will be said with regard to this when The Book of Concord's confession of the ordained minister's role is explained.

BEM also confesses the source of authority for the ordained ministry within the body of Christ. BEM confesses that "The authority of the ordained ministry is rooted in Jesus Christ, who has received it from the Father (Matt. 28:18), and who confers it by the Holy Spirit through the act of ordination."<sup>17</sup> Yet, BEM also confesses that the authority of Jesus Christ was connected to His willingness to commit Himself to the community. BEM confesses of the ordained ministers, "They manifest and exercise the



authority of Christ in the way Christ himself revealed God's authority to the world, by committing their life to the community. Christ's authority is unique. 'He spoke as one who has authority (exousia), not as the scribes' (Matt. 7:29). This authority is an authority governed by love for the 'sheep who have no shepherd' (Matt 9:36). It is confirmed by his life of service and, supremely, by his death and resurrection. Authority in the Church can only be authentic as it seeks to conform to this model."<sup>18</sup> Thus, the source of the authority for the ordained ministry is unclear in BEM. While BEM does not confess what it means by the authority for the ordained ministry being "rooted in Jesus Christ," it also confesses that Christ's authority was "governed" and "confirmed" by His life of service to the community. It would seem that the community is the final source and proof of authority for the ordained ministry. This conclusion is strengthened when BEM confesses regarding the ordained ministers, "Only when they seek the response and the acknowledgement of the community can their authority be protected from the distortions of isolation and domination." This placing of the community above the Word of God as the source and authority for the ordained ministry is an attempt to add to that which has been given the Church by God. More will be noted in The Book of Concord's Ministry section.

BEM addresses the subject of women in the ordained ministry by stating that "Where Christ is present, human barriers are being broken. The Church is called to convey to the world the image of a new humanity. There is in Christ no male or female (Gal. 3:28). Both women and men must discover together their contributions to the service of Christ in the Church."<sup>19</sup> While addressing this issue from the "order of salvation," BEM is already demonstrating a preference for women's ordination. While commenting on the present situation, BEM states that "An increasing number of churches have decided that there is no biblical or theological reason against ordaining women, and many of them have subsequently proceeded to do so. Yet, many churches hold that the tradition of the Church in this regard must not be changed."<sup>20</sup> While giving the impression that the only reason some churches do not ordain women is due to "tradition" is to ignore the Biblical mandate opposing women's ordination and amounts to a denial of that which is given. In the "Commentary" section discussing this same issue, BEM at least acknowledges that there are theological considerations involved in the non-ordination of women. It states:

Those churches which do not practice the ordination of women consider that the force of nineteen centuries of tradition against the ordination of women must not be set aside. They believe that such a tradition cannot be dismissed as a lack of respect for the participation of women in the Church. They believe that there are theological issues concerning the nature of humanity and concerning Christology which lie at the heart of their

convictions and understanding of the role of women in the Church.<sup>21</sup>

Thus, BEM does recognize that there are differences within Christendom with regard to the ordination of women, but also seems to frame its discussion from the "order of salvation" (Gal. 3:28) while ignoring other Biblical texts which address this issue directly. This approach tends to lead to a position that favors women's ordination and rejects much of that which is given in the Scriptures. This rejection of that which is given by God has already been shown to be contrary to the way of the Gospel and of faith (see pp. 8-9).

In discussing the role of the ordained ministry, BEM states, "In order to fulfill its mission, the Church needs persons who are publicly and continually responsible for pointing to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ, and thereby provide, within a multiplicity of gifts, a focus of its unity."<sup>22</sup> BEM never clearly defines what it means by "focus of unity." This phrase is only loosely connected with the ministry of Word and Sacrament when BEM states, "Any member of the body may share in proclaiming and teaching the Word of God, may contribute to the sacramental life of that body. The ordained ministry fulfills these functions in a representative way, providing a focus for the unity of the life and witness of the community."<sup>23</sup> While it would seem from this statement that this "focus of unity" is



in some way connected to the ministry of Word and Sacrament, the exact connection is not defined. BEM makes this determination even more difficult when it states that "It is especially in the eucharistic celebration that the ordained ministry is the visible focus of the deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body."<sup>24</sup>

This statement suggests that the ordained minister becomes a sign or symbol for the "communion between Christ and his body." There is no mention of the body and blood of Christ being the "all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body." Once again, the community and its ordained minister are confessed to have a higher significance in the Eucharist than that which is given by God--the body and blood of Christ!

BEM confesses that "The New Testament does not describe a single pattern of ministry which might serve as a blueprint or continuing norm for all future ministry in the Church."<sup>25</sup> Yet, BEM does confess what might best be called a "preference" for the threefold ordained ministry of Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon. BEM states that although different forms of the ordained ministry have existed, "nevertheless the threefold ministry of bishop, presbyter and deacon may serve today as an expression of the unity we seek and also as a means for achieving it."<sup>26</sup> Here, the threefold ministry is given the ability to express and actually achieve unity in the Church. In a similar statement, BEM refers to those

who are presently not operating in this threefold form of the ordained ministry and comments, "Their acceptance of the episcopal succession will best further the unity of the whole Church if it is part of a wider process by which the episcopal churches themselves also regain their lost unity."<sup>27</sup> Once again, the threefold ministry, not purity of Gospel and Sacraments, is confessed to be able to effect unity in the Church. This is another example of man attempting to create (Law) that which only God can give (Gospel) and leads to an improper distinction of Law and Gospel (see pp. 8-9).

## ENDNOTES

### BEM'S CONFESSION OF MINISTRY

1. Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry, Faith and Order Paper no. 111 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1982), I, 1, p. 20.

2. Ibid. In commenting on the term broken world, the Lutheran Church of Australia (LCOA) writes: "By and large, what is written concerning 'The Calling of the Whole People of God' is acceptable. Some of the wording may be a little strange to our ears, e.g. is broken world of (M1) a sinful, rebellious world that has removed itself from its Creator, or is it simply a humanly divided world?" (Max Thurian, ed., Churches Respond to BEM, 2 vols. (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1986) 2:92).

3. Ibid., I, 3, p. 20.

4. Ibid., I, 2, p. 20.

5. Ibid., I, 1, p. 20.

6. Ibid., I, 3, p. 20.

7. Ibid., I, 5, p. 20.

8. Ibid., I, 4, p. 20.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.

11. Ibid., II, 7, a-c, p. 20.

12. Ibid., II, A, 13, p. 22.

13. Ibid., II, C, 17, p. 23.

14. Ibid., II, A, 11, p. 22.

15. Ibid., II, A, 12, pp. 21-22.



16. Ibid., Commentary 13, p. 22. In commenting on the use of the term "focus of unity" to describe one of the functions of the ordained minister, the LCOA writes: "The paragraph that causes immediate concern, however, is M8. What precisely is it that provides 'a focus for its (the Church's) unity'--the ordained persons themselves, or their 'pointing (the Church) to its fundamental dependence on Jesus Christ?' If it is the latter, understood in the sense of the proclamation of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in accordance with the divine word (AC VII), then there is no problem for us. But if it is the former, and paragraph M-14 implies that it is when it states that it is not simply the 'eucharistic celebration' but 'the ordained ministry' in the eucharistic celebration that is 'the visible focus of the deep and all-embracing communion between Christ and the members of his body,' then the ordained ministry is being regarded as a visible sign of the church's unity and possibly also as a means for achieving such unity. This is contrary to AC VII and similar passages in our confessions" (Churches Respond, 2:93).

17. Ibid., II, B, 15, p. 22.

18. Ibid., II, B, 16, p. 23.

19. Ibid., II, D, 18, p. 23.

20. Ibid., II, D, 18, p. 24.

21. Ibid., Commentary 18, p. 25. The LCMS responds to this section dealing with the ordination of women by stating, "It is our judgment that BEM has not adequately summarized the weighty Biblical and theological arguments against the ordination of women, nor does it recognize what serious barriers these are to full doctrinal unity" (LCMS Response to the Commission on Faith and Order of the World Council of Churches to the text of 'Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry', (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, 1985), p. 18.

22. Ibid., II, A, 8, p. 21.

23. Ibid., Commentary 13, p. 22.

24. Ibid., II, A, 14, p. 22.

25. Ibid., III, A, 19, p. 24.

26. Ibid., III, A, 22, p. 24.

27. Ibid., IV, B, 38, p. 30. In commenting on the preferences that BEM demonstrates for the three-fold ministry pattern, the LCOA writes: "The Church of the Lutheran Confessions is not committed to any particular order of the church or any particular pattern of the ordained ministry. It is committed to the ministry of the church, that is, 'the ministry of teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments (AC V).'" (Churches Respond, 2:97).

## CHAPTER VII

### THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S CONFESSION OF MINISTRY

#### Law

The "Ministry" section of Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry (BEM) was investigated for its confession of the inborn sinfulness of man and this investigation was documented in the previous section of this paper (see pp. 77-78). The term broken was used, as it was in the Baptism section of BEM (see p. 77) to describe man's state by nature. The Book of Concord's confession of man's natural sinful state has already been presented in this thesis (see pp. 27-30) and will not be repeated. It was found to be more specific and severe than BEM's use of the term broken.

BEM is also found to be void of any statement regarding the absolute need for the ordained ministry of Word and Sacrament--man's utter inability to come to God without the work of the Holy Spirit (see pp. 77-78). The Book of Concord, however, does confess man's inability to establish a saving relationship with God on his own. The Book of Concord states, "I believe that I cannot by my own



reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith . . . . "<sup>1</sup> In a similar statement, The Book of Concord confesses that "neither you nor I could ever know anything of Christ, or believe on Him, and obtain Him for our Lord, unless it were offered to us and granted to our hearts by the Holy Ghost . . . . Therefore sanctifying is nothing also than bringing us to Christ to receive this good, to which we could not attain of ourselves."<sup>2</sup> The Book of Concord states that "where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Ghost who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord."<sup>3</sup> Thus, man's sinful nature and inability to believe in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of his sins is stressed in The Book of Concord while the inability of man to believe apart from the working of the Holy Spirit through the Gospel is absent from BEM. Thus, The Book of Concord makes an accurate distinction regarding the Law and Gospel in their proper sense (see pp. 2-4), while BEM does not.

A further comparison can be made regarding the confession of man's condition following conversion. BEM has used the term frailty to describe the sinful nature that remains in man following his conversion (see p. 78). The Book of Concord confesses the threat posed by Satan upon the

Christian as encompassing a much greater threat than the word frailty would suggest. The Book of Concord states:

This part now relates to our poor miserable life, which, although we have and believe the Word of God, and do and submit to His will, and are supported by His gifts and blessings, is nevertheless not without sin. For we still stumble daily and transgress because we live in the world among men who do us much harm and give us cause for impatience, anger, revenge, etc. Besides, we have Satan at our back, who sets upon us on every side, and fights (as we have heard) against all the foregoing petitions, so that it is not possible always to stand firm in such persistent conflict . . . . For since the flesh in which we daily live is of such a nature that it neither trusts nor believes God, and is ever active in evil lusts and devices, so that we sin daily in word and deed, by commission and omission, by which the conscience is thrown into unrest, so that it is afraid of wrath and displeasure of God, and thus loses the comfort and confidence derived from the Gospel; therefore it is ceaselessly necessary that we run hither and obtain consolation to comfort the conscience again.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, The Book of Concord is much more specific in describing the sinful nature (flesh) that resides in man after his conversion and the sins that he daily commits (Law) than is BEM. As The Book of Concord states, "On account of our flesh which we bear about us we are never without sin."<sup>5</sup> The Book of Concord confesses man's sinfulness both before and after conversion, while BEM avoids specific confession of man's sinfulness (Law--see pp. 77-78).

The Book of Concord also deals with unbelievers existing within the Church--those who would normally be designated "hypocrites." The Book of Concord states: "For we grant that in this life hypocrites and wicked men have

been mingled with the Church, and that they are members of the Church, according to the outward fellowship of the signs of the Church, i. e., of Word, profession, and Sacraments, especially if they have not been excommunicated."<sup>5</sup>

Not only does The Book of Concord recognize that the Church has hypocrites within its membership, but it also confesses that some of the clergy are "wicked." The Book of Concord confesses, "Neither are the Sacraments without efficacy for the reason that they are administered by wicked men; yea, we can even be right in using the Sacraments administered by wicked men. For Paul also predicts, 2 Thes. 2:4, that 'Antichrist will sit in the temple of God,' i.e., he will rule and bear office in the Church."<sup>7</sup> In a similar manner, The Book of Concord confesses, "Although the Church properly is the congregation of saints and true believers, nevertheless, since in this life many hypocrites and evil persons are mingled therewith, it is lawful to use Sacraments administered by evil men, according to the saying of Christ: 'The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat, etc. Matt. 23:2.'"<sup>8</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord does confess that hypocrites in laity and clergy exist within the Church.

Thus, The Book of Concord presents a full exposition of Law dealing with the need for the ordained ministry, including man's own sinfulness and inability to come to God without the preaching of the Word. This is more descriptive



and condemnatory of man's natural condition than is BEM's description of man's natural condition as a "broken world" (see pp. 77-78). The Book of Concord also confesses man's continued sinfulness following His calling by the Holy Spirit in more specific terms than BEM's frailty, going so far as to say that "we are never without sin" (see above). Even the clergy are said to be infested with hypocrites who are actually "wicked." Thus, The Book of Concord is much better at confessing that which "convicts man of his sin" (Law--see pp. 2-4) than is BEM.

#### Gospel

The Book of Concord does define the Church in terms of the Gospel. It says that the Church is defined as "the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered."<sup>9</sup> In like manner, The Book of Concord differentiates between the outward "marks of the church" which are evident and that which really constitutes the Church:

But the Church is not only the fellowship of outward objects and rites, as other governments, but it is originally a fellowship of faith and of the Holy Ghost in hearts. (The Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward signs, but it consists especially in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God); which fellowship nevertheless has outward marks so that it can be recognized, namely, the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ. (Namely, where God's Word is pure, and the Sacraments are administered in conformity with the same, there certainly is the Church, and there are Christians). And this Church alone is called the body of Christ, which

Christ renews (Christ is its Head) and sanctifies and governs by His Spirit. . . <sup>10</sup>

Thus, The Book of Concord does define membership in the "true Church" in terms of "faith items," related to the Gospel (Holy Ghost, faith, fear and love of God). ". . . The wicked are in the Church only in name, not in fact; but . . . the good are in the Church both in fact and in name."<sup>11</sup> This true Church, in the same way, is defined in terms of the pure Gospel and Sacraments administered according to that pure Gospel. It should be noted that The Book of Concord does not include Christ's "life of service" in the definition of the foundation of the Christian Church as does BEM (see p. 79).

BEM was shown to base the life of the Church on Christ's victory over the powers of evil and death and His offer of forgiveness and deliverance from destruction (see pp. 78-79). Yet, it did not specify how this victory and offer of forgiveness and deliverance from destruction was actually given to the members of the Church (see p. 79). The Book of Concord agrees with BEM that the Gospel is the foundation for the Church. The Book of Concord states, "Besides, it is necessary that in the Church of Christ the Gospel be retained, i.e., the promise that for Christ's sake sins are freely forgiven and remitted."<sup>12</sup> Yet, The Book of Concord adds the fact that this Gospel must be proclaimed if there is to be a Church: "Where Christ is not preached,

there is no Holy Ghost who creates, calls, and gathers the Christian Church, without which no one can come to Christ the Lord."<sup>13</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord is much more specific in defining the Gospel and in discussing how it serves as the foundation of the Church--by its being preached! The Book of Concord would also confess that where the Gospel is not preached, there is no Church! Thus, The Book of Concord confesses the "necessity" for the preaching of the Gospel in the Christian Church.

The Book of Concord further describes the relation between the Christian Church and the Gospel when it states, "We further believe that in this Christian Church we have forgiveness of sin, which is wrought through the Holy Sacraments and Absolution, moreover, through all manner of consolatory promises of the entire Gospel. Therefore, whatever is to be preached concerning the Sacraments belongs here, and, in short, the whole Gospel (das ganze Evangelium, totum evangelium) and all the offices of Christianity, which also must be preached and taught and preached without ceasing."<sup>14</sup> To further confess the connection between the Christian Church and the forgiveness of sin, The Book of Concord further states that it is in this Christian Church that "He forgives daily and richly all sins to me and all believers."<sup>15</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord confesses the fact that the forgiveness of sin through faith in the atonement of Jesus Christ is the foundation of the Christian Church



and is received through the preaching of the Gospel. It also confesses that "all the offices of Christianity. . . must be preached without ceasing." This would include both Law and Gospel in their proper forms (see pp. 2-10). BEM has been silent regarding the preaching of the Law to reveal man's sin and the Gospel as the foundation of the Church and the main activity of the ordained minister (see p. 79).

While both The Book of Concord and BEM talk of the relationship between Christ and service and stress Jesus Christ preceding service to God, The Book of Concord also stresses the inevitable factor of good works following faith. For example, The Book of Concord states, "But after a man has been justified by faith, then a true living faith worketh by love, Gal. 5:6, so that thus good works always follow justifying faith, and are surely found with it, if it be true and living; for it never is alone, but always has with it love and hope."<sup>16</sup> As further evidence, The Book of Concord states that "Furthermore, it is taught on our part that it is necessary to do good works, not that we should trust to merit grace by them, but because it is the will of God."<sup>17</sup> In the same manner, The Book of Concord rejects a voluntary doing of good by the Christian when it states: "Accordingly, we also believe, teach, and confess that when it is said: The regenerate do good works from a free spirit, this is not to be understood as though it is at the option of the regenerate man to do or to forbear doing good

when he wishes, and that he can nevertheless retain faith if he intentionally perseveres in sins."<sup>18</sup> Thus, while both BEM and The Book of Concord stress good works following membership in Christ's Church, The Book of Concord does more to stress the inevitable fact that these good works will follow faith in Jesus Christ (the Gospel).

BEM was also shown to confess the working of the Holy Spirit in the conversion and giving of gifts, and keeping one in the faith (see p. 80). The Book of Concord joins BEM in this confession when it states, ". . . the Holy Ghost has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. . . ." <sup>19</sup> In like manner, The Book of Concord states that Christ's Church "is always the kingdom which He quickens by His Spirit. . . ." <sup>20</sup> The Book of Concord confesses that it is the Holy Spirit that "first leads us into His holy congregation, and places us in the bosom of the Church, whereby He preaches to us and brings us to Christ."<sup>21</sup> Thus, both BEM and The Book of Concord would confess the Holy Ghost as the One who calls man to faith.

While BEM states that the Holy Spirit works in the heart of an individual (see p. 80), it was never specific in stating exactly how or by what means the Holy Spirit works. The Book of Concord stresses the working of the Holy Spirit in the conversion of man, but also stresses the fact that the Holy Spirit works through the means of grace (Word and

Sacrament) to accomplish this conversion. The Book of Concord confesses how the Holy Spirit works through the preaching of the Word when it states: "For in the first place, He (the Holy Spirit) has a peculiar congregation in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which He reveals and preaches, (and through which) He illumines and rekindles hearts, that they understand, accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it."<sup>22</sup> In talking about the treasure of conversion and forgiveness of sin, The Book of Concord also states, "That this treasure, therefore, might not lie buried, but be appropriated and enjoyed, God has caused the Word to go forth and be proclaimed, in which He gives the Holy Ghost to bring the treasure home and appropriate it to us."<sup>23</sup> It is through the Word and Sacraments, "as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that hear the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake."<sup>24</sup> As a matter of fact, The Book of Concord is quick to add that the Lutherans "condemn the Anabaptists and others who think that the Holy Ghost comes to men, without the external Word, through their own preparations and works."<sup>25</sup>



In a very similar confession of the Holy Ghost's working through the Word to accomplish conversion, The Book of Concord states:

God the Holy Ghost, however, does not effect conversion without means, but uses for this purpose the preaching and hearing of God's Word, as it is written Rom. 1:16: The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth. Also Rom. 10:17: Faith cometh by hearing of the Word of God. And it is God's will that His word should be heard, and that man's ears should not be closed Ps. 95:8. With this Word the Holy Ghost is present, and opens hearts, so that they, as Lydia in Acts 16:14, are attentive to it, and are thus concerted alone through the grace and power of the Holy Ghost, whose work alone the conversion of man is.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, while BEM does not define the means of conversion, it was found to stress that the ordained minister should be involved in preaching the Word and administering the Sacraments for the building up of the community (see p. 83). It also stated that the Holy Spirit does call men to faith (see p. 80), but it never connected the preaching of the Gospel with the calling of men to faith. In contrast, The Book of Concord confesses that the Holy Spirit works to call men to faith but goes further in explaining the exact means by which conversion is accomplished--by the preaching of the Gospel (see above).

While BEM confessed that the role of the ordained minister was to "build-up the body of Christ" and to serve as a "focus of unity" for the community (see pp. 83-85), The Book of Concord connects the ordained ministry most directly with the preaching of the Gospel, the administering of the

Sacraments, and the obtaining of faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. The Book of Concord states, "That we may obtain this faith, the Ministry of Teaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments was instituted. For through the word and Sacraments, as through instruments, the Holy Ghost is given, who works faith, where and when it pleases God, in them that here the Gospel, to wit, that God, not for our own merits, but for Christ's sake, justifies those who believe that they are received into grace for Christ's sake."<sup>27</sup> Thus, The Book of Concord would see the role of the ordained minister not in terms of "building-up the body" or "focussing unity," but rather to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments, so that men might obtain faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Closely related to this is BEM's confession that the authority for the ordained ministry was found chiefly in the ability to surrender in love and service to the community (see pp. 85-86) and that this authority can only be protected from isolation and distortion through the acknowledgement of the community (see p. 86). In contrast, The Book of Concord connects the authority of the ordained ministry to the call from God to proclaim the Word of God. The Book of Concord states:

But this is their opinion, that the power of the Keys, or the power of the bishops, according to the Gospel, is power or commandment of God, to preach the Gospel, to remit and retain sins, and to administer Sacraments.

For with this commandment Christ sends forth His Apostles, John 20:21 sqq.: As my Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. Mark 16:15: Go, preach the Gospel to every creature.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, while BEM places the authority for the ordained ministry in the community, The Book of Concord places it solely with the call of God that the Gospel be preached. In further testifying to the authority of the ordained minister coming from God, not the community, The Book of Concord states, "For of all acts of worship that is the greatest, most holy, most necessary, and highest, which God has required as the highest in the First and the Second Commandment, namely, to preach the Word of God. For the ministry is the highest office in the Church. Now, if this worship is omitted, how can there be knowledge of God, the doctrine of Christ, or the Gospel? But the chief service of God is to teach the Gospel."<sup>29</sup> Once again, the authority for the ordained ministry lies in the command of God and is consistent with His desire that the Gospel be preached! BEM confesses this authority as resting with the community.

BEM was also shown to confess that unity could be achieved and demonstrated by the community in the adopting of the threefold pattern of ministry--Bishop, Presbyter, and Deacon (see pp. 89-90). In confessing this, BEM is professing that unity in the Church can be achieved through externals. In contrast, The Book of Concord confesses that



true unity in the Church is not a matter of external appearance, but rather of faith. The Book of Concord confesses, "And to the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the Sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, that is, rites or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike. As Paul says: 'One faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, etc. Eph. 4:5,6.'"<sup>30</sup> The Book of Concord adds: "The Christian Church consists not alone in fellowship of outward signs, but it consists especially in inward communion of eternal blessings in the heart, as of the Holy Ghost, of faith, of the fear and love of God: which fellowship nevertheless has outward marks so that it can be recognized, namely, the pure doctrine of the Gospel, and the administration of the Sacraments in accordance with the Gospel of Christ."<sup>31</sup> Thus, true unity is not something that can be achieved by man's efforts of restructuring (Law) but is already given by God in the Gospel and Sacraments (Gospel) (see pp. 8-9). First this unity is given in internal items of faith, then it is discernable in outward marks (see above).

While BEM confessed that the ordained minister had a "representative role" in the community (see pp. 84-85), BEM never clarified the basis or foundation of that role. It never clearly defined whether this role came from God, or from the ordained minister himself. On the contrary, The

Book of Concord confesses that the ordained minister has a representative role, but only due to the call of the Church to preach the Word and administer the Sacraments: "Neither does the fact that the Sacraments are administered by the unworthy detract from their efficacy, they represent the person of Christ, and do not represent their own persons, as Christ testifies, Like 10:16: 'He that heareth you heareth Me.' (Thus even Judas was sent to preach.) When they offer the Word of God, when they offer the Sacraments, they offer them in the stead and place of Christ."<sup>32</sup> Thus, while BEM is vague with regard to exactly who or what the ordained minister is representing, The Book of Concord is clear to confess that the ordained minister represents Christ, by His Call. This assures that the hearts of the faithful will not be terrorized by doubts regarding Word and Sacrament ministry of any of the ordained ministers. For, once again, their authority does not lie in their own good character, but in God's Call given through the Church.

While BEM was found to have a detailed section listing some of the gifts that the Holy Spirit bestows on His Church and how they are to be used in Christ's Church (see p. 80), such a well-defined description is absent from The Book of Concord. The Book of Concord, on the other hand, does define the "office of the keys" as having been given to the whole Church, and quotes 1 Peter 2:9 in connection with the office of the keys and not in connection with service

that is to be rendered by individual church members. The Book of Concord's use of 1 Peter 2:9 is as follows: "Here belong the statements of Christ which testify that the keys have been given to the Church, and not merely to certain persons, Matt. 18:20: Where two or three are gathered together in My name, etc. Lastly, the statement of Peter also confirms this, 1 Ep. 2:9: Ye are a royal priesthood. These words pertain to the true Church, which certainly has the right to elect and ordain ministers since it alone has the priesthood."<sup>33</sup> Thus, 1 Peter 2:9, the passage that is used often by Lutheran authors to define the "royal priesthood of all believers" is not used in this context in The Book of Concord.

On the other hand, The Book of Concord identifies the office of the keys as belonging to the Church while BEM is silent on the Church forgiving and retaining sins. The Book of Concord defines the office of the keys as "the office and power given by Christ to the Church for binding and loosing sin, not only the gross and well-known sins, but also the subtle, hidden, which are known only to God."<sup>34</sup> The Book of Concord also confesses that this office of the keys belongs to the entire Church when it states:

It is necessary to acknowledge that the keys belong not to the person of one particular man, but to the Church, as many most clear and firm arguments testify. For Christ, speaking concerning the keys, Matt. 18:19, adds: "If two or three of you shall agree on earth," etc. Therefore, he grants the keys principally and immediately to the Church, just as also for this reason the Church has principally the right of calling (For



just as the promise of the Gospel belongs certainly and immediately to the entire Church, so the keys belong immediately to the entire Church, because the keys are nothing else than the office whereby this promise is communicated to every one who desires it, just as it is actually manifest that the Church has the power to ordain ministers of the Church. And Christ speaks in these words: "Whatsoever ye shall bind," etc., and indicates to whom He has given the keys, namely, to the Church: "Where two or three are gathered together in My name." Likewise Christ gives supreme and final jurisdiction to the Church, when He says: "Tell it unto the Church."<sup>35</sup>

Thus, The Book of Concord sees the office of the keys as having been given to the entire Church, just as certainly as the promises of the Gospel have been conferred to the entire Church.

The Book of Concord also states that Bishops have the opportunity to bind and loose sins, but this is understood as having been conferred through the Church "according to their calling."<sup>36</sup> This binding and loosing is also to be done in submission to the will of God, as expressed in His Word. The Book of Concord states, "The Bishop has the power of the order, i.e., the ministry of the Word and Sacraments; he has also the power of jurisdiction, i.e., the authority to excommunicate those guilty of open crimes, and again to absolve them if they are converted and seek absolution. But their power is not to be tyrannical, i.e., without a fixed law; nor regal, i.e., above law; but they have a fixed command and a fixed Word of God according to which they ought to teach, and according to which they ought to exercise their jurisdiction."<sup>37</sup> Thus, while the

Church has the office of the Keys, it is to do so under the authority and guidance of the Word of God.

Yet, The Book of Concord is careful not to identify the office of the keys as that which identifies the true church. In rejecting the articles of faith espoused by the Schwenkfeldians, The Book of Concord rejects as erroneous the view "That it is not a true Christian congregation (church) in which no public excommunication (some formal mode of excommunication) or no regular process of the ban (as is commonly called) is observed."<sup>98</sup> That which defines the Church in The Book of Concord has been stated above.

Thus, The Book of Concord has been shown to distinguish Law and Gospel very accurately with regard to "ministry," while BEM, on the other hand, was shown to be vague in its confession of Law and Gospel. For example, man's sinful condition and his need for the preaching of Law and Gospel was clearly confessed in The Book of Concord (see pp. 94-98), but BEM mentioned only the terms broken and frailty to describe man's condition outside of salvation. BEM's confession of Law falls short of that outlined at the beginning of this thesis (see pp. 2-4).

The Book of Concord was also shown to define the Church on the basis of the Gospel and the Sacraments (see pp. 98-100), even going so far as to say that without the preaching of the Gospel, there is no Holy Ghost and no Christian Church (see p. 95)! This is a clear confession of

the centrality and essence of the Church being the Gospel! In contrast, BEM is silent with regard to the preaching of Law and Gospel as that which truly defines the Christian Church.

While BEM did confess the Holy Spirit as active in working faith (see p. 80), it is silent on how the Holy Spirit accomplishes His work. The Book of Concord, on the other hand, stressed the "full-giftedness" of conversion as coming from God (see pp. 8-9). Once again, this is the way of the Gospel and the way of faith (see p. 100)!

The Book of Concord clearly confesses the role of the ordained minister as that of preaching the Gospel and administering the Sacraments (see p. 106). BEM, on the other hand, confessed in more than one place, that the ordained minister was to serve as a "focus of unity" for the community (see pp. 88-89). BEM is never specific on exactly what it means by a "focus of unity."

Finally, a contrast in the proper distinction of Law and Gospel is seen when it comes to confessing the authority for the ordained ministry. The Book of Concord confesses that the authority for the ordained ministry is given in the Word of God (see p. 107). BEM, on the other hand, confesses the authority for the ordained minister found chiefly in his ability to surrender in love and service to the community



(see pp. 85-86). Thus, his authority seems to be rooted more in man (Law) than in that which is given in God's Word (Gospel) (see pp. 8-9).

ENDNOTES

THE BOOK OF CONCORD'S CONFESSION OF MINISTRY

1. Small Catechism, part II, par. 6, in Concordia Triglotta, Die symbolischen Bücher der evangelisch-lutherischen Kirche (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), p. 545.
2. Large Catechism, part II, par. 38-39, Concordia Triglotta, p. 689.
3. Ibid., part II, par.45, p. 689.
4. Ibid., part III, par. 86-89, p. 723.
5. Ibid., part II, par. 54, p. 693.
6. Apology of the Augsburg Confession, art. VII, par. 3, Concordia Triglotta, p. 227.
7. Ibid.
8. Augsburg Confession, art. VIII, par. 1-2, Concordia Triglotta, p. 47.
9. Ibid., art. VII. par. 1, p. 47.
10. Apology, art. VII, par. 4-6, Concordia Triglotta, p. 227.
11. Ibid., art. VII, par. 11, p. 229.
12. Ibid., art. IV, par. 121, p. 155.
13. Large Catechism, part II, par. 45, Concordia Triglotta, p. 689.
14. Ibid., part II, par. 54, p. 693.
15. Small Catechism, part II, par. 6, Concordia Triglotta, p. 545.
16. Epitome of the Formula of Concord, art. III, par. 8, Concordia Triglotta, p. 795.

17. Augsburg Confession, art. XXI, par. 27, Concordia Triglotta, p. 57.
18. Epitome, art. IV, par. 12, Concordia Triglotta, p. 799.
19. Small Catechism, part II, par. 6, Concordia Triglotta, p. 545.
20. Apology, art. VII, par. 18, Concordia Triglotta, p. 238.
21. Large Catechism, part II, par. 37, Concordia Triglotta, p. 687.
22. Ibid., part II, par. 42, p. 689.
23. Ibid., part II, par. 39, p. 689.
24. Augsburg Confession, art. V, par. 2-3, Concordia Triglotta, p. 45.
25. Ibid., art. V, par. 4, Concordia Triglotta, p. 45.
26. Epitome, art. II, par. 4, Concordia Triglotta, p. 787.
27. Augsburg Confession, art. V, par. 1-3, Concordia Triglotta, p. 45.
28. Ibid., art. XXVIII, par. 5-7, Concordia Triglotta, p. 85.
29. Apology, art. XV, par. 43, Concordia Triglotta, p. 327.
30. Augsburg Confession, art. VII, par. 2-4, Concordia Triglotta, p. 47.
31. Apology, art. VII, par. 5, Concordia Triglotta, p. 227.
32. Ibid., art. VII, par. 28, p. 237.
33. Treatise On The Power And Primacy Of The Pope, par. 69, Concordia Triglotta, pp. 523-524.
34. Smalcald Articles, part III, art. VII, Concordia Triglotta, p. 493.
35. Treatise, par. 24, Concordia Triglotta, p. 511.



36. Augsburg Confession, art. XXVIII, par. 8, Concordia Triglotta, p. 85.

37. Apology, art. XXVIII, par. 14, Concordia Triglotta, p. 447.

38. Epitome, art. XII, par. 7, Concordia Triglotta, p. 843.

## CONCLUSION

The criteria for defining and evaluating Law and Gospel, as well as their proper distinction, were established in an earlier section of this thesis entitled, "Law and Gospel" (see pp. 2-10). Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry (BEM) and The Book of Concord were then examined and compared as to their confession of Law and Gospel, and in particular, as to their distinction of Law and Gospel. As a result of this examination, BEM was found to maintain an inadequate confession of Law and Gospel and their proper distinction. While numerous examples were noted in this thesis, three major areas of inadequacy will be highlighted here:

- 1). An inadequate confession of man's sinful, lost condition. BEM does not mention man as "condemned," "under God's wrath," or "born sinful and lost." Instead, the only description of man's world that BEM uses is the broken world (see p. 13 and pp. 77-78). Natural man is said to share in this brokenness. Following conversion, man is described as frail. The terms broken and frail can mean many different things when it comes to describing man's condition. BEM's lack of specificity and severity in describing man's natural

condition leads to an inadequate confession of the Law (see pp. 2-4), which leads to an inadequate confession for the need of the Gospel.

2). Giving man (the Church) a role in securing blessings from God. BEM confessed the Church to engage in an intercession in the Eucharist on behalf of the whole world and to effect blessings for this world through its intercession (see pp. 42-43). This "eucharistic intercession" was also said to move the Holy Spirit to effect the "real presence" in the Eucharist. Baptism was defined as "God's gift and our human response to that gift" (see p. 16), giving one the impression that Baptism is not complete until man responds. In addition, BEM confessed that faithful participation in the life of the Church was necessary for the full fruits of Baptism to be realized. Once again, man (the Church) seems to be playing a role in securing blessings from God (see pp. 14-16). BEM also confessed that the authority for the ordained ministry rested with the community (man) (see pp. 85-86). In all of these examples and others noted in this thesis, the proper distinction between Law and Gospel is obscured because man is given the credit for achieving (Law) that which is confessed in Scripture as a gift from God (Gospel) (see pp. 8-9).

3). A denial (failure to confess) the gifts given by God. BEM makes no specific and definite confession



regarding the forgiveness of sin being given in Baptism or the Lord's Supper (see pp. 17-18 and p. 46). There is no definitive confession regarding the body and blood of Christ as being offered and received "in, with, and under" the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper (see pp. 47-50). Instead, one is said to receive the "assurance of forgiveness" and the "pledge of salvation" (see pp. 46-47) in the Lord's Supper. The "anamnesis of Christ" is confessed to be the content of the Lord's Supper (see p. 49). This failure to confess the gifts given by God is a failure to confess the Gospel (see pp. 8-9).

In contrast, The Book of Concord was shown to make a confession as to man's sinful nature, lostness, and condemnation under the wrath of God (see pp. 2-4 and pp. 27-31). The Book of Concord was shown to confess the gifts given by God in both Baptism and the Lord's Supper (see pp. 32-39 and pp. 63-74). These gifts are confessed as given by God, without any merit or intervention by man. Thus, BEM was found to fail as a confession of Baptism, Eucharist, and Ministry that properly confesses and distinguishes Law and Gospel.

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